POLITICAL LECTURES.

5

Volume the First—Part the First:

CONTAINING

THE LECTURE

ON

SPIES AND INFORMERS,

AND

The First Lecture on Prosecutions for Political Opinion.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A NARRATIVE OF FACTS RELATIVE TO THE RECENT ATTEMPTS TO WREST FROM THE PEOPLE THE PALLADIUM OF THEIR NATURAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS,

LIBERTY OF SPEECH.

BY JOHN THELWALL.

"Lectures have been delivered on political subjects, calculated from their "very extravagance to catch the attention of the audience, and in the course "of them every topic has been employed that could inflame their minds, "alienate them from the laws and constitution of their country, and habitu-"ate them to principles of sedition and rebellion."

Second Report of Secret Committee.

LONDON:

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1795.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

I SEND into the world a fourth edition of my First, and a third of my Second Lecture, that it may be judged how far the character given of them in the Report of the Secret Committee of the Houſe of Commons is conſiſtent with truth. If my perſecutors had not added to the injuſtice of detaining me ſeven months in cloſe confinement, upon a groundleſs charge of High Treaſon, that of withholding my manuſcripts, and other property, now I am acquitted, I might have added to them ſome others that have never yet been publiſhed: for it is a curious fact that they were in poſſeſſion, moſtly in my own hand writing, of all the notes of all the Lectures I ever delivered, though it was not thought fit to bring one of theſe notes in evidence againſt me: A tolerably ſtrong preſumption that they did not themſelves believe the monſtrous abſurdities which their perjured ſpies were to ſwear againſt me. For though theſe notes, *generally*, contained only the ſketch and outline, yet if the Lectures had really been of ſo treaſonable a nature as was repreſented, it is ſomething extraordinary that no marks of this treaſon ſhould be found among the memorandums.

With reſpect to the Lectures now republiſhed, it may perhaps be objected, by thoſe who are more enclined to cavil than examine, that the preſent edition does not exactly correſpond with the former. Thoſe, however, who take the trouble to compare them, will find the variations conſiſt principally in corrections of the ſtile (which, in the former editions of the firſt Lecture, was certainly very defective) and not at all in the political ſentiment, or any thing that relates to the innocence or criminality of the compoſitions.

There are undoubtedly ſome few expreſſions of intemperance, and ſome of levity, which my cooler judgement does not approve. Thoſe I have reprinted verbatim: becauſe I wiſh my country not only to have an opportunity of judging how far I am innocent or guilty, but how far my perſecutors had any foundation for that charge of guilt upon which they ſought my life. But wherever the impartial examination of this queſtion is not concerned, I do not think myſelf called upon to perpetuate bombaſt, or to withhold the pruning knife from exuberances which were the conſequences of haſty compoſition.

The corrections will be found principally in the firſt Lecture, and thoſe who give themſelves the trouble to compare it with the ſmall edition, which is ſtill in print, will find them to be of the nature I have deſcribed.

Upon the ſubject of Political Proſecutions four Lectures have been delivered; but whether the other three will ever make their appearance depends upon the deciſion of the previous queſtion—Whether a man who has been *unjuſtly* proſecuted for High Treaſon, forfeits thereby all claim to his own property?

Beaufort Buildings,
Dec. 27th, 1794.

INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE

TO THE THREE FORMER EDITIONS.

LECTURES upon political or miſcellaneous topics are ſo much a novelty to the town, and the attempts which have been made to prevent their delivery, as well as the public countenance they have met with, have been ſo flattering, that though the ſize of the preſent pamphlet will ſcarcely juſtify the formality of a preface, I have thought it neceſſary to introduce it with a few obſervations on the circumſtances which induced me to adopt the preſent plan. This I believe I cannot commence in a more proper manner than by a brief hiſtory of the ſuppreſſion of the Society for free Debate, a few days before the *famous* Proclamation of Nov. 1792.

Of this Society I was one of the acting members, that is to ſay, one of thoſe who were accountable for the rent and diſburſements, who received the profits, and who took upon themſelves the reſponſibility for the queſtions brought forward. It had been in exiſtence, at different places, for near half a century; and during that time, though a variety of political topics, both of a temporary and general nature, had been diſcuſſed with the greateſt freedom, the legality of its meetings had never been called in queſtion. The only attempt to interrupt its deliberations, previous to the introduction of the preſent ſyſtem of inquiſitorial Tyranny, was during the diſcuſſion of the *Regency Bill*, when the Lord Mayor ſent his marſhalman to ſuſpend the queſtion: an interference which the audience rejected with becoming indignation. But about the cloſe of the ſeaſon which terminated in April 1792, the dancing maſter, from whom we hired the uſe of Coach-Makers Hall, after repeated indications of terror and alarm, informed us, that, on account of the threats and remonſtrances of perſons in authority, he could not venture to renew his agreement with us, unleſs we would covenant not to bring forward any queſtions of a political nrture. As the committee were not much inclined to be dictated to by a dancing maſter in the ſelection of their queſtions, and as for my own part I had formerly withdrawn from the ſociety on account

account of the frivolous ſubjects with which it had been diſgraced, and had only rejoined it upon an implied condition that *none but* political queſtions ſhould be debated, we inſtantly rejected the diſgraceful conditions, and withdrew to the King's Arms in Cornhill. At the commencement of the enſuing ſeaſon I was not preſent, being on an excurſion in Kent, for the reſtoration of my health.

During that excurſion, I occaſioned a public meeting to be called, and a debate to take place in Canterbury, a few days before the entrance of Mr. Pitt into that city; upon which occaſion the deciſion of four or five to one "that, in the then "ſituation of France, a *Republican government* ought to be "preferred to a limited monarchy," gave ſuch ſerious alarm, that I am told troops of ſoldiers were poured into the place as ſoon as I had turned my back upon it; and dreadful denunciations of vengeance were thundered againſt me by the aſſembled corporation *as ſoon as I was known to be out of their power.*

When I returned to London I found the public all awake. The fate of *the great criminal of France* was in agitation, and, together with the barbarous manifeſto of the Duke of Brunſwick, furniſhed eternal topics of converſation and debate; and the diſcuſſions of the ſociety, in which I reſumed my place, partook of all the animation to be expected from the ſtate of politics. I appeal, however, to the frequenters of thoſe debates, whether the utmoſt good order was not generally obſerved; and whether, though expreſſions of popular diſapprobation were ſometimes called forth by the illiberal violence and perſonal abuſe of the Ariſtocratic party (for it is curious that this party ſo loud in their *charges of violence*, ſhould always be the foremoſt to *practiſe* it) whether the utmoſt impartiality was not conſpicuous in the conduct of the chairman, and uſual ſpeakers of the ſociety. The abilities and the deciſions, it is true, were almoſt uniformly on the democratic ſide; and the doom of the inſtitution was therefore ſealed. Threats and denunciations, in the names of perſons in authority, were ſpread abroad againſt it; and private intimations were conveyed to me of the conſultations upon the ſubject.

Affairs were in this poſture when the queſtion was brought forward, "Whether the neutrality of the maritime powers "of Europe was to be attributed to their approbation of the "French Revolution, or their dread of introducing ſimilar "conſequences among themſelves?" On this occaſion an individual, too much in the habit of diſturbing public meetings, ſurrounded with a clamorous party of aſſociates, tried the patience of the audience to ſuch a degree with a torrent

of

of ſcurrility and perſonal abuſe (ſuch as calling the ſpeakers, and particularly myſelf, Jacobins, agitators, aſſaſſins, traitors and villains) that, in ſpite of all the efforts of the chairman and the committee to protect him, an attempt was made to turn him out. Conſiderable confuſion enſued; ſo that no further diſcuſſion could take place upon that evening, and the queſtion was accordingly adjourned. I mention this circumſtance, becauſe ſome have attributed to this *accidental*, or *premeditated* riot*, the ſubſequent ſuppreſſion of the ſociety. The fact, however, is, that the ſcheme had been long in agitation; and as it took place juſt at the time the proclamation of alarm was publiſhed, it appears as though it were a member of the general plan—one of the *ways and means* for exciting terror and apprehenſion throughout the country, diſappointing the hopes of parliamentary reform, and hurrying the affrighted people into a war with France. Be this as it will, the wiſe heads of the corporation were laid together to concert our immediate diſperſion; and as theſe cabals were not unknown to me, and as I was conſcious of the legality of the meeting, I went on the enſuing Thurſday evening with a ſtrong expectation of being obliged to contend againſt the magiſtracy of London, for the right of political diſcuſſion, in ſuch a manner as to bring the queſtion to iſſue in a court of juſtice. Sir James Saunderſon, however, had taken his meaſures more craftily. He had ſent for the perſon of whom we hired the room, and induced him to ſtick up a bill in the forenoon, declaring the ſociety adjourned till further notice; and to refuſe admittance to us and our company, upon condition that, the meeting being thus diſappointed, a guard of conſtables ſhould preſerve his premiſes from popular indignation.

It is curious to obſerve that notwithſtanding the underhanded manner in which this adventure was atchieved, Sir James had the addreſs to procure thanks from the Common Council, as if he had ſuppreſſed the Debating Society by his open authority; though nothing could be further from the truth. So confident was I that he had no ſuch authority to exert, that I ſtrained every nerve to procure another room *in the city* where the debates might be continued: conſcious that the liberty of ſpeech, and of the preſs, are the vital organs of *all that is valuable in our Conſtitution;* without the

* It is now paſt a doubt that this riot was premeditated; ſince, on the night of my arreſt, *Walſh*, the well known itinerant confidant of *Gentlemen high in office*, told me, in the courſe of converſation, that the perſon who occaſioned the diſturbance at the King's Arms *was taken there by him.*

exerciſe

exercise of which Freedom can never maintain its ground againſt the encroachments of power and prerogative. My attempts were however fruitleſs; though I offered to the amount even of *Twenty Guineas for a ſingle night*. Some had been threatened with the loſs of their licences, others that their houſes ſhould be pulled down, and all refuſed.

The next expedient was to aſſert in as public a manner as poſſible the right of political inveſtigation, and to ſhew the public that this right had never *openly* been called in queſtion by perſons in authority. It was with this view, more than from any hope of obtaining a room, that I cauſed the following advertiſement to be printed on a large poſting-bill, and ordered it to be ſtuck up about the metropolis.

"*VINDICATION of the LIBERTY of SPEECH.*

"*Whereas an illegal and oppreſſive combination of divers perſons, yet unknown, has taken place, to annihilate the great palladium of the Britiſh Conſtitution, the liberty of ſpeech: And whereas, by means of this illegal and oppreſſive combination, the owners of certain rooms have been over awed or ſeduced, by ſome ſecret means, to refuſe the letting of their rooms to perſons intending to exerciſe the conſtitutional right of free debate:—this is to give notice, that having taken the advice of ſeveral counſel learned in the laws, upon the queſtion: and being ſufficiently ſatisfied by them of the legality and conſtitutional foundation of the right of political diſcuſſion, I am reſolutely determined to aſſert and vindicate this invaluable right of freeborn Britons, in whatever place the opportunity can be gained; and I do hereby advertiſe all perſons having rooms within the city of London, capable of holding from two to five or ſix hundred perſons that (taking all legal and pecuniary reſponſibility upon myſelf) I am willing to give the ſum of twenty guineas, (to be paid before entrance on the premiſes) for the uſe of any ſuch room for one night, upon application to me,*

JOHN THELWALL.

"*No. 6, Weſton-ſtreet, Southwark.*"

The men who undertook to poſt this advertiſement, were treated with ſo much inſult and perſonal violence, by perſons evidently ſet to watch the ſtreets for ſuch occaſions, that they were obliged to deſiſt, after very few had been diſtributed. In the mean time I had written to Sir James Saunderſon the following letter, and cauſed it to be delivered at the Manſion-houſe.

"*To*

" *To Sir James Saunderſon, Knt. Lord Mayor of the City of London.*

" *Sir,*

" *I take the liberty of writing to you upon a ſubject which, as it muſt neceſſarily become the theme of public inveſtigation, ought certainly to be properly underſtood: and I have delayed my enquiries till my mind has become cool under the impreſſion of the injury and inſult I have received, in order that I might addreſs you with the calmneſs due to your official character, in how equivocal a light ſoever your perſonal conduct, may, in this reſpect appear.*

" *I am one of the members of the committee by which a ſociety (ſanctioned in every reſpect by the letter and ſpirit of the Britiſh conſtitution, and eſtabliſhed in its rights by long continued uſage) is conducted; and who, at the begining of this ſeaſon, agreed with Mr. Bourke, upon the payment of certain legal and valuable conſiderations, for the uſe of his room in Cornhill, one night in the week, for the purpoſes of that ſociety, during the winter.*

" *This being the caſe, I conſidered that,* by the laws of this land, *I was joint tenant of the room ſo hired, for the weekly night agreed upon; and that every tenement being, in the language of our* boaſted *conſtitution, the* CASTLE *of its tenants or occupiers, thoſe tenants muſt have an undoubted conſtitutional right to free, peaceable ingreſs and regreſs to and from that caſtle, together with ſuch lawful perſons as they ſhall chooſe to introduce or invite. What, then was my ſurpriſe, when going, on Monday laſt, to meet the company whom, in concert with my colleagues, I had lawfully invited to the room we had ſo hired, I found the doors of our caſtle cloſed againſt us, and guarded by a mob of conſtables, armed with the ſtaff of* that very man's *authority who, a few years ago, as* Chairman of the Quintuple Alliance, *ſigned many of the boldeſt reſolutions which that aſſociation adopted, and by his frequent attendance and ſtrenuous ſupport, gave his ſanction to publications much more likely to be offenſive to perſons in the reſpective branches of the Government, than any thing that ever came from the ſociety he was thus endeavouring illegally to ſuppreſs.*

" *But I am unwilling, notwithſtanding the fallacious repreſentations in the reſolutions of the Common Council, to bring an accuſation againſt any gentleman till I am thoroughly acquainted with the foundation upon which it ſtands; and I ſhould be much more happy in an opportunity to defend, than a neceſſity to reprobate, the conduct of one who once pretended, at leaſt, to be a friend of Liberty. I expect, therefore, if not in candour to* us, *at leaſt, in juſtice to yourſelf, that you will explain to me, and to the ſociety, the circumſtances of this affair, that we may know how much of thi violation of public and private rights is attributable to the Chief*

Magiſtrate

Magiſtrate of the City of London, and how much to the timidity of Mr. Bourke.

"*I am, Sir,*

"*An Engliſhman by birth and ſpirit,*

"*No. 6, Weſton-ſtreet,* JOHN THELWALL.

"*Southwark, 1ſt. Dec. 1792.*"

To this letter, *of courſe*, I received no anſwer. And as from the firſt I had been deſerted by all my aſſociates; moſt of whom, by this time had been to the great man at the Manſion-houſe, and made their peace, I found myſelf incompetent to encounter, ſingle-handed, all the expence and trouble of the further proſecution of the queſtion. However, ſtill penetrated with the importance of the right ſo jeſuitically invaded, I determined to ſeize the firſt opportunity of reviving the exerciſe of that right, and of vindicating the inſulted claims of Reaſon.

In the courſe of that winter another Debating Society was opened, at the Globe tavern, Fleet-ſtreet, by ſome young ſtudents of the law, who, by *a diſhonourable compromiſe*, relative to the queſtions that ſhould be brought forward, and *the ſentiments that ſhould be permitted to be delivered*, (they called it, however, a Society for *free and impartial debate*,) obtained *permiſſion* from the Lord Mayor to open their mouths for other purpoſes than thoſe of eating. To this ſociety I went three or four times, and as often diſdained the ſervile ſhackles with which this baſe compromiſe endeavoured to reſtrain the faculties of Britons. Every time I was oppoſed, and perſonally abuſed by the timid members of this *profeſſional* committee; and every time I was ſupported by the ſenſe and ſpirit of the people; who, notwithſtanding the alarm ſo generally diffuſed, ſtill loved the man who told them bold truths; and would not ſuffer him to be inſulted.

From this time the queſtion of the right of political diſ-
diſſion appeared to ſleep, till about the beginning of No-
vember 1793, when a queſtion concerning the love of life,
the love liberty, and the love of the fair ſex, being agitated
at Capel-court I went, for the firſt time, to that ſociety,
and delivered the ſpeech for publiſhing a part of which
the ſtory of King Chantecleer) Citizen Eaton was confined
three months in newgate; being unable to find bail for the
enormous ſum of two thouſand pounds; and which was,
after all by the good ſenſe of an independent jury, found

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Shortly after the delivery of this ſpeech, being then on the committee of the London Correſponding Society, and it being neceſſary to provide for the ſupport of our delegates; I offered for the two fold purpoſe of inſtruction and encreaſing the requiſite ſubſcriptions, to give a courſe of political lectures every Wedneſday and Friday, admitting the members (who are moſtly men in a humble ſituation of life) at a low price, leaving it open, at the ſame time, to ſtrangers, and appropriating the whole receipts to the ſupport of the delegation. This plan was accordingly purſued for two or three months, and with ſuch ſucceſs that, though I began with but eleven auditors, yet, in a ſhort time, without any advertiſement, or public intimation whatever, ſixty or ſeventy perſons of both ſexes, frequently aſſembled, and honoured the lectures with the moſt flattering applauſe.

This had not gone on long before I received intimation that in the room adjoining that in which I delivered my lecture, a party of Mr. Reeves's aſſociators, and their fit companions, the Bow-ſtreet runners, were to be concealed; from whence, like ſo many cats upon the poor harmleſs mouſe of a lecturer, they were to bounce forth, on the firſt expreſſion which they, in their omnipotent wiſdom, ſhould deem ſeditious, and drag him in mercileſs indignation to Newgate. Some of my *friends* endeavoured to perſuade me not to go; ſome adviſed me to take Blackſtone's commentaries for my lecture; and ſome to read a chapter from the *bible*: nay ſome learned authorities endeavoured to perſuade me that it was high treaſon to attempt to inſtruct his majeſty's liege ſub-

of the proſecution, and of the incongruity and *abſolute falſehood of the innuendoes:* for the ſtory is a literal fact. It was told to illuſtrate the difference between muſcular, and what is called voluntary action; and the embelliſhments, without intending to fix the ſimilitude upon any individual in particular, were introduced to ſhew the ſtriking reſemblance between all *tyrants*, whether of brute or human ſpecies, and to point out, as Mr. Gurney, upon the trial, affirmed, that "The ſooner they were got rid of the better; for they are generally too "bad to be mended." Whether there is not a better way of diſpoſing even of theſe peſts of ſociety than by holding up the example of *public murder* (for every execution in fact is ſuch) I will not now enquire: but certain it is that if it be treaſon to declare that tyrants ought to be put to death, the great majority of the friends of freedom [which I ſhould hope is the majority of the people of this country] are traitors to all intents and purpoſes. As for the affirmation that *tyrant and king are ſynonomous terms*, and that it is impoſſible to mention a tyrant, even though it be a tyrant game Cock, without alluding to our own *moſt gracious Sovereign*—theſe are libels ſo groſs, that none but a ſtate proſecutor could have the audacity to publiſh them.

jects, and that I ſhould certainly be hanged. My own mind, however, was preſently made up; and I compoſed for that evening, and delivered in the preſence of ſome of Mr. Reeves's *honourable* aſſociators, who were in reality preſent, the lecture "On the moral tendency of a ſyſtem of Spies "and Informers," which, with ſome additions and alterations, is here preſented to the public.

The ſucceſs of this experiment induced me to wiſh for a proper place where the lectures could be more publicly delivered; and being informed that I might have the uſe of the long room at the Three Kings in the Minories, I immediately bargained with the landlord, and billed the town with my advertiſements. The *worthy* ſucceſſor of the *worthy* Sir James Saunderſon, who had promiſed "*to walk in his ſteps, to fear* "*God, and honour the king*," was immediately alarmed; marſhalmen and conſtables were diſpatched all over the metropolis to tear down the bills; and an *embaſſy* was ſent to the *Three Kings* to prevent the meeting. The landlord was, however, perſuaded, when the time arrived, to ſtick to his agreement for that night only; the lecture now publiſhed was delivered to near two hundred people, and received with unbounded applauſe.

As, in the mean time, I had been offered the uſe of a room at the Park Tavern, in the Borough, I poſted the town with another bill, announcing a debate on the following queſtion for the enſuing Monday—"Which is to be conſidered as "more deſtructive in its principles and conduct, the preſent "or the American War?" The alarm of our ſapient magiſtrates was now greater than ever. The bills were pulled down as faſt as they were put up: and violent threats were denounced, which were carefully conveyed to me on Sunday morning, that if I dared to hold the meeting, I ſhould moſt aſſuredly be taken into cuſtody. To this I replied by ſending advertiſements to the papers to ſupply the loſs of my poſting bills. The landlord was next threatened with the loſs of his licence; but with as little effect. A numerous company aſſembled: and among the reſt a banditti of about twenty profligate and diſorderly wretches (officers of the police) from Union Hall, together with a reverend magiſtrate wrapped and muffled up in his great coat to direct their operations. In the face of theſe I took the chair; avowed myſelf to be the ſole reſponſible cauſe of calling the meeting, gave a narrative of the circumſtances contained in the former part of this introduction, and called the attention of the company to the queſtion. Upon this the *captain* of the *banditti* (I do not mean the *magiſtrate*—He like a prudent *general* kept aloof from the affray; and diſperſed his orders by his *aides de camp*)

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The captain of the banditti made a curious ſpeech of about three lines, in praiſe of kings, and concluded with "*wiſhing* "*deſtruction to all the world.*" The *keepers of the peace* thought this a proper ſignal for them to begin their part, and they accordingly with one tumultuous roar bellowed forth "God "ſave great" &c. which they regularly reſumed every time that any body attempted to ſpeak to the queſtion; filling up the pauſes with all the inſult that vulgarity could deviſe. The indignation of the company roſe at this behaviour; and the experiment might have proved a fatal one, if I had not had influence enough to keep the inſulted friends of liberty in order, and prevent them from attempting to turn out the rioters. In the midſt of all the turbulence and inſult of this banditti I kept my *chair* and my *temper* till the uſual hour of ten; when I declared the meeting and the queſtion adjourned to ſuch future time and place as hereafter might be found convenient; obſerving that the *legality* of the meeting was eſtabliſhed beyond diſpute, ſince the banditti of *police officers* and *cut-throats* who attended, and who had ſufficiently diſplayed the hoſtility of their *wiſhes*, had not dared to exert even the ſhadow of *authority* againſt either the meeting or myſelf. The ruffians ſeeing the meeting thus in danger of diſperſing without riot, began to proceed to perſonal violence; attempted to overturn the elevation upon which my deſk and chair were placed; and extinguiſhed the lights. It was then that a gentleman who was preſent went in queſt of a magiſtrate, who was ſitting all the while below; and, aſking him if he meant to ſit there while murder was committed by his runners, inſiſted upon his interference to reſtrain the riotous inſolence of thoſe wretches; to which he replied, with conſiderable agitation, "that he had ſent the "conſtables up ſtairs" (*the very deſperadoes who made the diſturbance!*) "what could he do more?" Finding however that he had to deal with a man who was not to be trifled with, he was coming up ſtairs, juſt as I had cloſed the meeting, and, ſurrounded by my friends, who had *thruſt the peace officers out of the way*, that they might *preſerve the peace*, was retiring from the ſcene of confuſion. I then demanded of the landlord a private room in which myſelf and my friends might regale ourſelves, till the ſtrangers had diſperſed; leſt by our departing altogether a riot might enſue. This however the *magiſtrate* would not permit him to grant; but he informed me that he would order the conſtables to attend me and keep the peace if I thought it neceſſary. I replied that his conſtables were the only riotous perſons in the meeting; and that if he ſuffered any of that banditti to come after me, *he muſt anſwer for the conſequences*; for *I would not*. The company however,

however took that care of the peace which the magiſtrate refuſed: for, blocking up the ſtaircaſe in a maſs, they kept the wild beaſts raging in confinement above, till they thought we had time enough to diſperſe.

Such is the conduct of the *peace officers* of the Borough; and ſuch the deportment of the magiſtrates of that paltry ſinkhole of meanneſs and timidity.

It happened that before this the landlord of the Three Kings had ſent requeſting me to give my lecture again at his room: being in fact very well pleaſed with the cuſtom it brought to his houſe. This lecture was accordingly delivered there again, on the Wedneſday following, to a very genteel and overflowing auditory; and was again received with very conſiderable applauſe.

On the evening of the former lecture a *council of corporation* had been held at a ſilverſmith's in the neighbourhood. On the preſent occaſion a grand conſultation was called at the Manſion Houſe, at which I am informed Sir James Saunderſon attended, to aſſiſt the divan with his councils. Violent meaſures, I am told, were propoſed; and the whole aſſembly were diſpoſed for war; till two of them, a little more ſagacious than the reſt, obſerved that as the law was on my ſide they might perhaps burn their fingers if they interfered. It was accordingly unanimouſly determined,—"That the "city marſhal with the whole poſſe of city conſtables ſhould "repair at eleven o'clock to the *Three Kings*, and prevent "the landlord from drawing any more beer and ſerving any "more punch to ſuch of the company as had ſtaid to "ſupper."

They did not, however, ſtop there, Licenſing day was at hand, and a meſſage was ſent to the landlord, in the name of the Lord Mayor, and certain Aldermen, informing him that if he dared to permit my diabolical Jacobin lectures againſt Spies and Informers, and ſuch like worthy perſonages, to be delivered any more in his houſe, his licence ſhould infallibly be taken away. The landlord promiſed ſubmiſſion; and ſent a meſſenger to me informing me of the circumſtauce, and my lecture was accordingly advertiſed in the public papers to be held at No. 3, New Compton Street, Soho. When lo! Lift up your voices,—O ye citizens of London, and applaud the prudent valour of your chief magiſtrate!—the great Paul le Meſurier ſeized the opportunity when the enemy was not upon the field to diſplay his proweſs and authority. The whole train of conſtables and marſhalmen were ſummoned to a man; and at the head of this formidable body (after having ſuffered two ſucceſſive meetings to be held without venturing to interfere) forth iſſued the high and mighty potentate

potentate to rout the company from a place where it was notorious it would not assemble.

With what kind of feelings must common sense reflect upon this mummery of would-be-thought authority.

The fact is, that the legality of political discussion cannot be controverted in this country; and time-serving magistrates, however they may bounce and bluster, know that it cannot, and therefore wish to intimidate where they cannnot controul. But in this they will also be disappointed; and the time is close at hand when not only political lectures, but political debates also, will be established on a foundation which will set the mock importance of these medlers at defiance.

POSTCRIPT *to the Fourth Edition.*

AS I am now about to send a fourth edition of this Lecture, together with a third of the second, into the world, it may not be amiss to continue the narrative of the opposition which has been made to the establishment of this important right—the public investigation of political subjects: a right of which, during the period of inquisition and alarm, I have been the individual asserter, at the repeated peril of my life; and which I pledged myself to establish, or to fall a victim in the attempt. The right is established, debating societies are again conducted without interruption at each end of the town; and it may therefore be amusing to some to trace the whole history of the contest.

While my Lectures were continued in Compton-street, several attempts were made to intimidate and interrupt me. The former was, however, impracticable, and all attempts at the latter, within the Lecture-room, were frustrated by my care to calm the irritation, and prevent the resentment of the audience. It was therefore resolved to make an attempt, from without, of the most atrocious nature. But the agents were not sufficiently secret, and it was disappointed. The landlord of a public house in the neighbourhood having told some of his customers, that a young gentleman of the name of *Jenkinson*,

> "(To whom related now avails us not,
> "From whom descended, or by whom begot),"

had hired a room in his house for the entertainment of fifty bludgeon-men who were to disperse the people at my lecture-room,

room, the conſpiracy got wind, and means were taken to fruſtrate it.

For my own part, my only precaution was to render my hat crown cudgel proof, and to carry in my hand a ſhort tuck ſtick to defend myſelf in caſe of extremity. Several friends, however, unſolicited by me, poſted themſelves in different parts of the neighbourhood, and ſent out their ſcouts to obſerve what paſſed. At about nine o'clock, the ruffians began to aſſemble in a very tumultuous manner at the door; when my friends ſuddenly making their appearance from all parts, they took to their heels in great terror; revenging themſelves for their diſappointment upon ſuch ſtraggling individuals as, to uſe their own language, they ſuſpected of being *Thelwallites*. One of this banditti was taken into cuſtody by a reſpectable ſhopkeeper in the neighbourhood, whom they had treated with brutality. I need not add, that the magiſtrates took care he ſhould not ſuffer too ſeverely for his *frolic*.

This was not the firſt time that bludgeons had been provided for the purpoſe of confuting my arguments. Shortly after the affair in the Borough, one of the police ruffians who had been the moſt active on that occaſion, was boaſting about it to that reſpectable magiſtrate Sir ** **; and, upon being aſked if they did not ſome of them get kicked down ſtairs, replied that they had ſixty or ſeventy good fellows, armed with bludgeons, ready to do the buſineſs of the d—d Jacobine raſcals if they had reſented.

I underſtand that the worthy magiſtrate declared himſelf ready to prove this circumſtance on the late trials if it had been thought important.

Shortly after the affair in Compton-ſtreet, I opened the lecture-room in Beaufort Buildings, where I was attended by a very reſpectable audience, encreaſing every night in number, till the room, ſpacious as it is, became too ſmall for their accommodation. The ſubject with which I opened was "the "impoſſibility of attaining either public or private virtue, "without the full indulgence of the liberty of ſpeech and of "the preſs." A ſubject, as thoſe who were preſent will remember, in the diſcuſſion of which I dwelt very copiouſly upon the importance of Benevolence, and all the virtues of private life; and the inſeparable union between theſe, and a genuine ſyſtem of political liberty. Yet this lecture, which even perſons who do not agree with my general politics, have

have applauded for its candour and morality, was one of those upon pretended quotations from which the charge of high treason was attempted to be supported.

Lectures in favour of Liberty, in the neighbourhood of Mr. Reeves, and upon the estate of the Attorney General, it may easily be supposed were a species of heresy not to be endured. Accordingly at the Court-Leet of the Dutchy of Savoy, held on Thursday, the first of May, an officious informer, in the neighbourhood of the Lecture-room, presented a copy of the second Lecture to the Grand Jury, and wished them to make it the foundation of a prosecution for libel. The Jury refused to be made the tools of so malignant a design, and observed, with becoming independence, that they were not, in matters of such importance, to be taken by surprise; and that *the book, if it did contain any libellous matter, ought to be repeatedly read, and maturely deliberated upon by the Jury, before they pronounced a censure upon it that might subject the author to such serious consequences.* This attempt was accordingly unsuccessful.

Mr. Reeves, however, the worshipful Steward of the district, did not suffer the matter to drop. A new Grand Jury for the ensuing year being sworn in, his charge, as I am informed, consisted almost entirely upon "the *seditious* Lectures "in Beaufort-buildings; which, he said, must not be per-"mitted to go unnoticed; they being in reality more dange-"rous than *all the tumbling-houses** in the metropolis. They "were calculated," he affirmed, "to inflame the public mind "against every thing *great* and *glorious* in the British Consti-"tution;" (such as *Spies, sinecure Placemen, Pensioners, unnecessary wars, inordinate taxation*, and the like!!) "and that "I had even agitated the passions of my auditory to such a "degree, that they jumped upon the benches, and cried out, "with one voice, *No King—no Parliament*, and *no Laws!*"

But the dose was too strong. The good sense of the Jury, nauseated at the absurdity; and the same charge of nuisance being brought by the same *loyal gentleman*, who presented the pamphlet, and being supported by the voluntary testimony of a Mr. Scott, a brandy merchant in the buildings, the Jury determined, this being an affair upon which every one might

* Some representations of nuisances of this sort had been made.

have an opportunity of forming his own judgment, that they ought to be witneſſes of the fact, before they pretended to decide. The Court being, therefore, held over, by adjournment, to Thurſday, May 8, the foreman and other jurors attended at the Lecture-room during the two intervening nights, to make their obſervations. The reſult was, that being perfectly ſatisfied of the legality of the meeting, and the good order with which it was conducted, they returned the following anſwer—"On hearing and duly conſidering the "complaints of ſeveral of the inhabitants of Beaufort-build-"dings, reſpecting the Lectures delivered by Mr. Thel-"wall, the Jury are of opinion, that they cannot preſent "the meeting at the ſaid Mr. Thelwall's Lectures as a *public* "*nuiſance.*"

This was a very unexpected ſtroke to certain honourable protectors of the LIBERTY and PROPERTY of *placemen and penſioners*; for infinite pains had been taken, by canvaſſing from houſe to houſe, to collect a heap of complaints together; and Mr. Steward Reeves, after an *aweful pauſe*, that excited the *tender feelings* of the aſſembly, began, with ſome heſitation, to remonſtrate that ſixteen *reſpectable* GENTLEMEN in the neighbourhood had complained of nuiſance, upon oath; but the foreman replied, in his former language, that the Jury had maturely conſidered the whole of the circumſtances, and that THEY FOUND NO NUISANCE.*

It is worth while, perhaps, to obſerve, that the foundations, or rather *pretences* for the charge of nuiſance were, that upon the lecture nights, four or five hundred people went up and down my ſtairs; and that a number of perſons collected about the door, who behaved in a rude and improper manner, and therefore *there might be a riot.* The good ſenſe of the Jury could not but obſerve the tendency of this might-be evidence: ſince if a man is to be *indicted*, becauſe it is poſſible a riot may hereafter happen at his door, he may, by a ſimilar mode of calculation, be *hanged*, becauſe there is a poſſibility that murder may be committed by ſome deſperado under his window.

Thus fruſtrated on every hand, the enemies of political inveſtigation had recourſe again to their old expedient—an attempt to produce a riot. A ſwarm of police officers attended the enſuing night, together with two coal-heavers, who interrupted

* The most atrocious part of this transaction is I find there omitted (the reasons for which I do not at present recollect—but I suppose from reluctance to bring the names of Mr Ritson, next to Reves, the principal officer of the Court, & Mr Ridge my legal adviser, into question upon the subject) but, it being known that I had determined to be present at the illegal second meeting of the Court, Mr Ritson sent me word that Reves had determined to take me into custody if I did, & deliver me into the hands of

terrupted the Lecture, by beginning to roar out the *good old Song*. I had the good fortune, however, not only effectually to restrain the indignation of the audience, and over-awe the rioters, but even to make zealous converts of the two deluded labourers; who, after having joined very loudly in the applause that was given to the Lecture, departed with many imprecations against their employers for having "misrepresented *the* "*good sort of gentlemen* so, and misled them into such a "business."

On the Tuesday after this I was apprehended on a charge of treasonable practices: and it is a little curious that the Lectures which many thousand people have attended, which the magistrates, by conniving at attempts of violence and practicing underhanded intrigues, instead of exerting their open authority, have tacitly confessed to be legal; and which Grand Juries have refused to present either as libels or nuisances, should be made part of a charge of high treason upon the single testimony of a perjured spy, of the most notorious and profligate character.

The wickedness of this attempt, however, has secured the triumph of Reason. The eyes of Britons are opening. They see they have rights, which, if they have courage they may vindicate; and the popular prerogative, if I may so express myself, of free investigation, will not I trust be shortly again disputed.

No. 2, Beaufort Buildings, Dec. 27th, 1794.

30 MR 64

LECTURE THE FIRST.

THE

MORAL TENDENCY

OF A SYSTEM OF

SPIES AND INFORMERS.

AND THE

CONDUCT TO BE OBSERVED

BY THE

FRIENDS OF LIBERTY

DURING THE CONTINUANCE OF SUCH A

SYSTEM.

Every Miniſtring Spy
That will accuſe and ſwear, is Lord of you,
Of me, of all, our Fortunes and our Lives.

BEN JONSON'S SEJANUS.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

POLITICAL LECTURES, &c.

LECT. I. *On SPIES and INFORMERS.*

CITIZENS!

THE ſubject of the preſent diſcourſe is not perhaps one of thoſe that promiſes the moſt ample entertainment; and if I had called you together merely to amuſe you, I ought rather to have ſelected ſome of the moſt ſtriking paſſages from "Hudibras," or "Don Quixote," or Burke's ſentimental romance of "Antoinetta, the falling ſtar of chivalry; "or Prieſts and Penſioners in the Suds at the News "of the French Revolution."

But this is no ſeaſon for the idle ſallies of imagination: the womb of Time is labouring with great events; and every friend to the peace and happineſs of mankind, is called upon to ſound the ſolemn alarum, and rouſe the ſoul to that ſerious train of contemplation, without which it is utterly impoſſible that we ſhould acquire the ſedateneſs and fortitude, which all of us, may have reaſon enough to deſire. In ſhort, this is a ſeaſon for enquiry and inſtruction, not for paſtime and jocularity; and it is therefore that I aſſemble you in this public manner, to ſtimulate you to enquire into the nature of your rights as Britons and as men; and to inveſtigate the nature and cauſes of that unhappineſ

which we cannot but feel, however ignorant we may be of the ſources from whence it is derived.

It is, however, a fortunate circumſtance in the conſtitution of man, that flattering as thoſe purſuits may at firſt appear which are to be conſidered merely as amuſive, the ſerious objects of mental exertion furniſh, in reality, a fund of more laſting and genuine ſatisfaction; and that happineſs is never ſo perfectly attained, as when, careleſs of the mere impreſſions of pleaſure, we purſue, with ardour and perſeverance, the path of duty, and preſs forward to the attainment of Truth and Wiſdom.

To illuſtrate this by a courſe of Political Lectures, is a taſk, which, if properly executed, could not fail to render you better members, not of the community only to which you belong, but of the world at large, which it is our duty to love and benefit, whatever State Hypocrites may preach about hoſtile intereſts, patriotiſm, and natural enmity.

Natural enmity!—As if the great law of nature, the arrangements and revolutions of ſeaſons and elements, from which the bounties of the earth proceed, and all the delights and gratifications of which our ſenſes are ſuſceptible, ſhould render two families of fellow creatures, whoſe powers, whoſe capacities, and the objects of whoſe exiſtence are the ſame, the neceſſary and implacable enemies of each other, merely becauſe a *fancied line upon a map*, or a *pool of troubled water* ſeparates them from each other.

Natural enmity!—How long are our intellects to be abuſed by this unintelligible jargon? Is it not conſpicuous that *all enmity between man and man is in itſelf unnatural?*—a direct violation of the great precept of nature—*that man ſhould ſeek his own felicity by labouring for the happineſs of mankind?*—Half ſtupified as we are by an indolent veneration for the

laws

laws and prejudices of a barbarous antiquity, Ambition itſelf cannot but ſee this truth—that the only natural enemies of any country, are thoſe who, foſtered in the lap of vicious and irrational diſtinction, and nurtured with paſſions and ſentiments inimical to the freedom and true equality of man, uſurp an unjuſtifiable dominion, and endeavour to deſtroy its liberties, and monopolize its bleſſings. This the enemies of liberty themſelves cannot but ſee. Happy would it be for them, and for the univerſe, if their eyes were opened to this additional truth, that even their own *real intereſts* (I mean their *happineſs*) would be ultimately advanced by yielding to the juſt wiſhes of the Friends of Liberty and Man. But this is a degree of political illumination too ſtrong at preſent for their optics; and inſtead of fortifying themſelves with reſolution to meet the full ray of reaſon, they expoſe the cowardice and imbecility of their minds, by a vain endeavour to extinguiſh the light of political enquiry, leſt it ſhould guide mankind to diſcoveries hoſtile to their monopolizing avarice, and deſtructive of that moſt profitable of all the various brances of the nefarious trade of courts—WAR!—that *European ſlave-trade!*—that deteſtable traffic in the blood and anguiſh of our fellow-creatures!

But to proceed to the ſubject of my Lecture. It is neceſſary that I ſhould, by my example, as well as my precept, endeavour to convince you of the ſenſe I have of the neceſſity of prudence, in this age of ſpies and informers:

" When laws are made to ſerve the placeman's will;
" When ſleeping they can ſave, and, waking, kill;
" When Public Juſtice borrows all her powers
" From private chambers; that in fact create
" Laws, judges, counſellors, yea prince and ſtate."

JONSON'S SEJANUS.

From theſe private chambers proceeds a ſyſtem of inquiſitorial tyranny never equalled but in the degenerate days of Roman ſlavery, under the adminiſtration of Sejanus and Rufinus. Every coffee-houſe is filled with party hirelings and venal aſſociators; anonymous letters are employed to blaſt the peace and deſtroy the perſonal ſecurity of the beſt and worthieſt members of the community;—even our own houſes and our own tables furniſh no longer a ſanctuary and an altar where it is ſafe to offer the free incenſe of friendly communication; and the very domeſtic who eats our bread ſtands open-mouthed behind our chairs to catch and betray the converſation of our unguarded moments*.—In ſhort, every key hole is an informer, and every cupboard ought to be ſearched before you unboſom the painful ſtory of your wrongs, leſt you ſhould be brought unhappily within the iron fangs of—LAW (I think *they* call it) not only for what you have uttered, but what perjured hirelings think fit to lay to your charge.

Citizens! the boaſted freedom of Britons is no more; and every man of intellect and virtue lies at the mercy of the pimps and lacqueys of courtiers and court expectants. Wretches that

"——————————" can lie,
" Flatter and ſwear, *forſwear*, deprave, *inform*,
" Smile and betray; make guilty men; then beg
" The forfeit lives, to get the livings; cut
" Men's throats with whiſp'rings; ſell to gaping ſuitors
" The empty ſmoak that flies about the palace;
" Laugh when their patron laughs; ſweat when he ſweats;
" Be hot or cold with him; change every mood,
" Habit and garb as often as he varies,"

And ſell their fellow-creatures to buy his empty favour.

* See the caſe of Mr. Muir.

At

At ſuch a time as this, the moſt guarded caution is evidently neceſſary, both in our conduct and expreſſions; and that this caution on the one hand may not degenerate into tameneſs and inactivity, nor be fruſtrated, on the other, by the ſnares of deſigning men, it becomes more requiſite than ever, that we ſhould cultivate, with diligence, every ſpecies of political knowledge; becauſe it is by ſuch means alone that a fund of intelligence can be obtained, that may enabbe us to utter our complaints with perſpicuity, without expoſing ourſelves to the malice that would devour us.

It will be ſeen by the tone of this Caution I am far from wiſhing to intimidate you. If a ſeaſon can be imagined, when it is peculiarly neceſſary to increaſe, rather than diminiſh, the ardour and fortitude of the human mind, it muſt undoubtedly be a period like the preſent, when inquiſitorial aſſociations and every ſpecies of conſpiracy and cabal (wrapped in the flimſy veil of *veneration for property and obſolete inſtitutions;* but revealing, through the thin diſguiſe, the clenched hand and thirſting dagger of Political Aſſaſſination) are plotting the deſtruction of Truth and Virtue, and meditating the annihilation of our remaining liberties. At ſuch a period, I ſhould ill deſerve your attention and confidence, ſhould I endeavour to damp the ardour with which ſo many fellow-citizens are engaged in enquiring into the rights and duties of mankind.

" We that know the evil,
" Should hunt the palace rats, or give them bane;
" Fright hence theſe worſe than ravens, that devour
" The quick, while they but prey upon the dead."

I am conſcious, Fellow Citizens, that it is by the privilege of ſpeech alone, that we are diſtinguiſhed

above the brute creation. Rather than relinquiſh, therefore, the free exerciſe of this noble attribute; let us brave the dungeons of Newgate and the inhoſpitable regions of New Holland; for better are theſe with fortitude and virtue than palaces and luxuries with a baſe and abject ſpirit. Come then from your lurking corners, ye tools of perjured treachery —ye ſpies, ye dark aſſaſſins, ye venal aſſociators for the moſt deteſtable purpoſes!—Bring all the terrors of your chains and dungeons; ye ſhall not daunt the ſoul that virtue fortifies, nor prevent the free diſcuſſion of thoſe truths which conſcience tells us are important for man to know.——*If we have RIGHTS*—(for it ſeems in the preſent day this muſt be made a queſtion) it is neceſſary we ſhould know in what thoſe rights conſiſt, that we may guard and protect them.—*If we have NONE*, (the popular ſentiment with certain pretended admirers of our Glorious Conſtitution) it is important that we ſhould know that alſo; that we may ſit down in patient reſignation, and prepare to hug whatever chains our maſters, *in their moſt gracious mercy*, may be inclined to throw upon us. At any rate, as we would wiſh to be peaceable and virtuous members of the community, it is neceſſary that we inform our minds by diligent cultivation: that we enquire into the nature and obligations of our own exiſtence, and what are the purſuits in which we ought moſt ſeduloufly to engage.

Theſe are the proper, the fundamental enquiries, in which it is the duty of human intellect to be employed. Without ſome attention to theſe, blundering inſtinct may ſometimes ſtumble upon rectitude; but the *rational*, the *ſublime* principle of VIRTUE! can never be acquired. Nor are theſe enquiries the moſt important of our *duties* only, they are alſo the moſt delightful of our *pleaſures*. Employed in the

purſuit

purſuit of theſe, man feels and enjoys the noble ſuperiority of his nature—his faculties expand, his heart dilates, his ſenſes acquire a keener ſenſibility—he looks abroad on the univerſe, and every part of it expands and brightens; while a crowd of pleaſures ruſh upon his imagination, to which the eye of Ignorance is for ever cloſed. He looks in the face of his fellow creature; and he ſees indeed a brother--or a part rather of his own exiſtence; another ſelf—He contemplates in every individual the faculties of ſufferance and enjoyment, and feels one nerve of ſympathy connecting him with the whole intellectual univerſe. Party diſtinctions and Party cavils, the offspring of ignorance and ſervility, vaniſh before him; and National Animoſity itſelf, appears with all its native abſurdity and vice. Peculiarity of feature is no longer a ſtimulus to malignity and injuſtice, nor does peculiarity of *opinion* excite his horror: the native of Gallia and the profeſſor of Mahometaniſm are regarded with the ſame benevolence as the man of his own ſect and country; and the ſooty African need lift his fettered hands no more to *remind* him that he is A MAN AND A BROTHER!—He enfolds the univerſe in one large embrace, and finds an eternal ſource of rational gratification in contemplating the felicity, or labouring to mitigate the calamities of his fellow creatures.

Such are the delights of intellect, and *free* communication of idea between man and man; and ſuch are the beneficent effects which this freedom of communication cannot fail of ultimately producing, wherever it ſhall be ſufficiently indulged: for ſelfiſhneſs and enmity are but two of the innumerable forms of error—and error itſelf is the conſequence only of that ignorance, which nothing but the free and fearleſs intercourſe of mind can remove. What then muſt be the ignorance or intereſted depravity

of

of thoſe, who would annihilate this intercourſe? Are they afraid that, by burſting the narrow boundaries within which the pride of family partiality, and the egotiſm of national prejudice, have ſo long confined our benevolence, we ſhould trample down the encloſures that ſecure their monopoliſed advantages; and that the ſoil of excluſive privilege, manured no longer by the blood of our contentions, and watered no longer with our tears, ſhould ceaſe to bring forth its abundance of honours, penſions and emoluments, upon which they ſo long have fattened, while we have ſtarved?—Or has that piety—that deep and lively ſenſe of RELIGION—for which the *Courts* of Europe have ſo long been famous, ſtimulated their conduct in this particular?—Are they fearful leſt that Paradiſe of felicity into which the unreſtrained improvement of human intellect might convert this globe, ſhould withdraw our meditations from that better world which is promiſed unto him that ſojourneth in ſorrow and affliction? and have they therefore, in kind anxiety for our future ſalvation, deviſed this method of perpetuating the miſery and aſperity of the world? Whatever be the object, the end to us, *in this world at leaſt*, is calamitous to the laſt degree, as our ſtarving manufacturers, and the widows and orphans of our countrymen ſlaughtered in a ridiculous cruſade to reſtore the loſt deſpotiſm of France, too well can teſtify. But whatever efforts ſpies, inquiſitions, and informers, may make to deprive us of the intellectual intercourſe which the heart of man muſt ever yearn for, let us keep the glowing proſpect of its probable conſequences conſtantly before our eyes, and endeavour to realiſe a picture not leſs eſtimable to reaſon than delightful to the imagination. And indeed ſo barren a wilderneſs would this world appear, if deprived of thoſe delights which intellectual intercourſe

can

can alone impart, that rather than endure exiſtence in the condition of "the mute ſhell-fiſh, gaſping on the ſhore," to which late aſſociations have endeavoured to reduce us, it were better to be rid at once of the incumbrance, and ſink into non-entity than remember we *once were* men.

It is not the free communication of ſentiment then, that I wiſh to reſtrain—it is the imprudent, intemperate manner of expreſſion, into which indignation ſometimes betrays the beſt intended individuals*. Let us enquire into the nature of our rights, but let us enquire with deliberate firmneſs. Let us be anxious to learn and to diſcharge our *duties*, but let us remember that of thoſe duties, violence or intemperance is by no means to be accounted one. Let *us* remember that PEACE *is better than the* SWORD OF SLAUGHTER;—though this is one of the propoſitions which the *ſagacious* luminaries of a certain *honourable* aſſembly have thought fit to call in queſtion:—When tranquility might have been preſerved by candid negociation, they preferred the bullying haughtineſs which could not but terminate in war.—But we are a *Swiniſh Multitude*, who can neither *participate in their motives*, nor underſtand *their logic*: All that we know about it is, that *our troughs are empty*, while the purſes of our OWNERS appear to be ſwelling every day with the price of thoſe of

* I inſert the following note written in the margin of a former edition by a philoſophical friend, becauſe reflection has convinced me that the doctrine is partly true: "No. You recommend caution, but it is not wanted. You tell us to look before and behind for ſpies before we ſpeak, but we need only look to ourſelves. In telling the truth it is ſcarcely poſſible there ſhould be danger; but we expreſs ſarcaſm, reſentment, contempt and vengeance: theſe are not truth, but falſhood. Our danger almoſt wholly lies in our vice. Boldneſs, and not caution, would remove it, the boldneſs that excited us to conquer our own miſtakes. Here lies the radical falſhood of your lecture."

our

our diminiſhed *herd* who already have been *ſold* and *butchered.*—Let us not forget, then, that as PEACE *is better than the* SWORD OF SLAUGHTER, ſo reaſon is better than turbulence and invective; and that though an honeſt indignation may now and then indulge itſelf, it ought always to be ſo reſtrained by the curb of *prudence*, as to be able to look Truth and Juſtice ſteadily in the face, and ſay, Behold, we have not treſpaſſed upon your ſacred laws. Nor muſt all the warmth of the heart be at all times uttered.

"We muſt abide our opportunity,
"And practiſe what is fit as what is needful."

There is alſo another—better motive than that of prudence, to prompt us to this moderation in our deportment—Benevolence!—the kind and candid feelings of the heart! without which a pure and enlightened freedom never can be enjoyed—never can be underſtood. Anarchy may rage where aſperity of ſoul triumphs in all its bitterneſs; but where perſonal hatred, and the burning deſire of vengeance uſurp dominion over the hearts of men, genuine liberty, and the tranquil happineſs which liberty ought to ſecure to us, never can be hoped. Reaſon and the pure ſpirit of philoſophy, are eſſential to this ſtate of ſocial independence, and theſe will teach us to conſider, that every action, however hoſtile to the ſacred cauſe we are purſuing, is the unhappy conſequence of errors reſulting from the circumſtances by which the actor has been ſurrounded; and that conſequently, inſtead of ſtirring up the gloomy paſſions of the ſoul, we ought to pity the inſtrument while we redreſs the evil.

To guard, in all poſſible inſtances, againſt illegal oppreſſion, is perhaps more than an active citizen can expect: but if the friends of liberty muſt ſuffer for

for their exertions, let them be ſure to have not only truth and juſtice but wiſdom and moderation on their ſide; and the eyes of mankind, at laſt, will open to the oppreſſion, and the nation will do them juſtice. Let us not adviſedly, give ſuch a triumph to our enemies, as to ſuffer the reaſoning part of mankind to ſide againſt us. Let the peaceable diffuſion of knowledge be our ſerious object; and reaſon be our only weapon: for, depend upon it, that as it is the buſineſs of the friends of deſpotiſm to create diſturbances, that they may have pretences for their oppreſſions, it is the part of the advocates of liberty to preſerve tranquillity, that the juſtneſs of their cauſe may be diſcovered. Truth and Liberty love the light—the uninterrupted light of reaſon—for why ſhould they be afraid to be ſeen? But Falſehood and Tyranny wiſh for darkneſs and confuſion: becauſe their deeds are too evil for impartial inveſtigation.

Let me not, however, while I am thus recommending prudence, be thought an apologiſt for a ſpecies of injuſtice but too prevalent.

If a friend of liberty, tranſported by his zeal for the public cauſe, ſhould treſpaſs upon the boundaries of prudence, and betray himſelf into the power of ſome officious coffee-houſe keeper*, or aſſociation ſpy; inſtead of meanly abandoning him in the hour of his misfortune, and joining in the cry of his accuſers, we ought to conſole him under his ſufferings, by every act of friendſhip; and blunt as much as poſſible the ſhaft of hoſtile revenge. Others may be inclined to venture more than we, or may think the public cauſe in want of ſtronger exertions. If they become the victims of theſe miſtakes are *we* the cenſors that ſhould award increaſe of puniſhment?

* Caſe of Pigot and Hodgſon.

Let

Let us be prudent, Fellow Citizens! if we can; it is a part of the juſtice we owe to ourſelves; but let us be juſt to others as long as we live; whatever imprudences they may have fallen into. Let us remember that ſcarcely any thing has a greater tendency to decreaſe our reverence for *Virtue*, than blindly confounding together, in one common cenſure, the errors of indiſcretion, and the malignity of vicious principle. There is alſo another reaſon why we ſhould be ſparing in our cenſures in caſes of this deſcription—namely, the foundation there is to doubt whether the victims of ſtate proſecution, which the preſent ſyſtem of ſpies and informers (unparalleled in the former annals of this, or any other *free* country) has doomed to languiſh in goals and dungeons, have, in reality been guilty even of the charges exhibited againſt them.

" Every miniſtring ſpy,
" That will accuſe and ſwear, is lord of you,
" Of me, of all, our fortunes, and our lives.
" Our looks are called in queſtion, and our words,
" How innocent ſoever, are made crimes;
" We ſhall not ſhortly dare to tell our DREAMS,
" Or think, but 'twill be treaſon."

With reſpect to our *thoughts*, indeed, the ATTORNEY-GENERAL, I am told, has admitted, upon a late occaſion, that a man is at liberty (glorious liberty, indeed!) to *think* what he pleaſes, provided he does not communicate his thoughts to others; (this is Britiſh *conſtitutional* liberty, I ſuppoſe!) and as Swift and other *Tory* writers have upheld the ſame *liberal* doctrine for this century paſt, perhaps our wiſe and virtuous governors will condeſcend to afford us the ſame toleration—*ſo long at leaſt as they are in poſſeſſion of no ſecret by which they can learn our thoughts previous to their communication.*

Something

Something of this ſort was indeed attempted, about fifteen months ago, by ſeveral members of a certain *immaculate* aſſembly: our looks being in reality called in queſtion, and a ſeditious meaning applied to the very ſmiles which ſome perſons had the libellous preſumption to wear upon their faces after the memorable battle of Jemap. So that, in the midſt of other ALARMS, with which the nation was harraſſed; I am informed that certain lovers of wit and pleaſantry were in horrible apprehenſion leſt it ſhould be made CAPITAL *to laugh without permiſſion of his* MAJESTY'S MINISTERS!

Upon the ſubject of dreams, the *ſapient* conquerors of veniſon and turtle—the *huge bellied* NESTORS to the weſt of Temple-Bar, carried the point I am informed, to more ſerious extremities; and a man was abſolutely carried before their *worſhips* for the crime of *dreaming ſedition!*

The caſe is ſingular; and deſerves attention, on account of the knotty points involved in the diſcuſſion; and I ſhall therefore report it at large, not doubting that the learned Judges of a future century will regard it with equal veneration, and refer to it as of equal authority with any thing contained in Blackſtone, Strange, or Plowden! or even the comments of "Coke upon Littleton."

The fact is, that much about the time when the genial warmth of miniſterial patronage quickened into exiſtence, a new race of reptiles, called FIFTY POUND MEN, a certain publican, living no great diſtance from Snow-hill, and keeping a houſe not very unlike the ſign of the *Three Butts*, being ſuſpected of having read Tom Paine without the worſhipful permiſſion of the Lord Mayor or Court of Aldermen; one of theſe ſaid FIFTY POUND MEN began to imagine he might find a lucky opportunity of ſhewing that he was not diſtinguiſhed by the beams

beams of courtly patronage in vain. He accordingly took a lodging in the houſe of honeſt *Tankard;* and as Fate, propitious to his wiſhes, would have it —his bed-room was immediately adjoining to that of his ſuſpected hoſt. I ſhall not dwell particularly upon the intermediate cares and anxieties of this virtuous *moucharde;* ſuch as the pains he took to place the head of his bed immediately againſt the thin partition, that not a whiſper might be loſt;—the tedious hours ſpent, night after night, in wakeful diligence; and the pains he took to drill holes through the wainſcot in convenient places, that he might ſee any dark conſpirators that ſhould pollute the den of treaſon with their nocturnal viſits. Suffice it that we paſs to the particular incident ſo deſervedly conſpicuous among the records of Reeves's Aſſociation.

It happened one night, that our redoubted Fifty Pound Man heard, among a ſelect company (to the key-hole of whoſe room he had been applying his *loyal* ear) ſomething about FREEDOM and REFORM. Confident therefore that ſome dreadful plot muſt be forming againſt our happy conſtitution, he ſtole up ſlily to his bed, as the company was diſperſing, and began to meditate upon his expected REWARD. In the midſt of theſe pleaſing meditations, he fell aſleep: but he had not ſlept long before he was awakened with ſome very unuſual exclamations. He rouſed himſelf from his bed, and put his eye to the accuſtomed hole—but all was dark: his ear was, however, applied with more ſucceſs, and he heard diſtinctly uttered, "Away with him to the "guillotine; off with his head at once; don't let "the ariſtocrats eſcape." This was enough—The fifty-pound man thought himſelf certain of preferment. He ſlipped out in the morning, procured a warrant,

warrant, and dragged the affrighted Tankard to the ſeat of *juſtice.*

The grave Divan aſſembled; the great armed chairs were ſeated, and the great bellies of the aldermen demanded the admiration of the meagre multitude: for, you muſt know, that whereas in Weſtminſter-hall the moſt conſpicuous objects are the large wigs that decorate the bench; ſo, at Guildhall, the moſt ſtriking features are the magiſterial bellies that dignify the great armed chairs.—And to deal plainly with you, I do not know why a belly as big as a tun ſhould not be as much revered as a wig of the dimenſions of a buſhel. Well, the portly bellies were aſſembled, over which the uſeleſs excreſcences *called* heads, juſt made their diminutive appearance: the culprit was put to the bar; the charge was made; a party of loyal aſſociators aſſembled to expreſs their indignation; and the ſentence was already more than half manufactured in Mr. Reeves's mint.

Honeſt Tankard was put upon his defence; and the ſedition evaporated in a dream.

He had gone to ſleep with the newſpaper in his hand which contained the account of thoſe wicked *ſans culottes* having taught the *new French bow** to the *innocent*, and *unequivocating* Louis; and his buſy imagination preſenting the ſcene before him, he had uttered the ejaculation in his ſleep.

Luckily for Tankard he was a married man; and his good woman being ſent for, and agreeing in the narrative (for ſhe had alſo been

* The levity of this expreſſion muſt be admitted to be perfectly inexcuſable. Whatever may be the crimes of the individual; the privation of life is no proper ſubject for a jeſt; it is a cruel and dire neceſſity: and if Juſtice muſt have its victim, Humanity ought to ſhed the tear. But I republiſh theſe lectures to ſhew the foundations of the charge brought againſt them; and am not therefore at liberty to ſtrike out the exceptionable paſſages.

awakened by the exclamation), and the candle burnt into the ſocket, and the newſpaper, by the bed ſide, confirming the whole account, ſome of the great bellies were for diſmiſſing the affair immediately. One of Mr. Reeves's aſſociators, however, (a young barriſter, very deſirous of preferment!) affirmed that there was evidently *malice prepenſe* in the dream; and that as the *malice prepenſe* in every caſe conſtituted the guilt, he could not think their worſhips juſtified in diſmiſſing the culprit; nor did he doubt but, if the books were ſearched with ſufficient diligence, ſome act of Parliament—or ſome caſe, or opinion (which amounts to the ſame thing) would be found, eſpecially if they looked back to the happy and ever to be regretted reigns of the Stewarts, which, by *liberal* conſtruction, would extend to the CRIME OF DREAMING SEDITION.

The caſe appeared entirely new; the whole divan was in confuſion; ſome ſhook their heads; others ſunk into a brown ſtudy; and others ſtared in each other's faces; while the clerks, buſy as ſo many bees, and anxious to ſhew their attachment to King and Conſtitution, tumbled over the four and twenty folios of acts of Parliaments; and thrice four and twenty folios more of indexes, reports, caſes, and abridgements; but, wonderful to ſay! upon dreaming all was ſilent— though there ſeems to be no ſubject which the authors of theſe books might be ſuppoſed to underſtand more perfectly. In ſhort, after ſpending three fourths of the day in hunting for rules and precedents, after twiſting and ſtraining every thing that came in their way, and taking the learned opinions of all the great law officers of the court and city, it was unanimouſly decided, that there being no caſe in point, it would not be prudent to puniſh the ſeditious dreamer for the firſt offence; and honeſt

Tankard

Tankard was diſmiſſed, upon a ſolemn promiſe, that he would never dream ſedition any more.

But to reſume the more ſerious tone of reprobation to which the ſubject is entitled.—It is one of the curſes of the infernal ſyſtem of theſe aſſociators, that it has a direct tendency to debauch the morals of the community, and deſtroy every principle that can ſecure to man the advantages of ſocial union; to introduce to every ſpecies of moral depredation —falſe accuſation, perjury and ſubornation of perjury; and, in ſhort, every abominable vice which treachery can deviſe, and malignity carry into execution.

Nor let it be ſuſpected, that this aſſertion is founded in prejudice, and the averſion which difference of political ſentiment is but too apt to breed in the boſoms of mankind. The facts upon which it is ſupported are to be traced with too much certainty, in the records of thoſe deſpotic countries in which the ſyſtem has, in former periods, been eſtabliſhed: and *in none but deſpotic countries*, let it be remembered, was it ever *before* attempted to be introduced. Nor is the circumſtance ſurpriſing. The conſequent depravity is to be accounted for with ſufficient facility, if we are at all acquainted with the principles of the human character, and the gradations by which it imperceptibly declines to the loweſt infamy. For vice no more than virtue is the offspring of an individual effort; and it is only by progreſſive ſteps that any conſiderable diſtinction, either in one or the other, is attained.

The diſtance, however, between the SPY and the PERJURER, is not very great. The neceſſity of confidence in our communications with each other, and eſpecially in that intercourſe of mind which is the ſource of all our comforts and improvements, is obvious even to the moſt ordinary intellect.

Accordingly we find, that the ſacred principle reſulting from this neceſſity is one of the firſt adopted in the rude beginnings of ſociety. Savages and barbarians would look with horror upon the wretch who ſhould lay traps to draw his countryman or aſſociate into unguarded converſation, with a view of repeating it to his diſadvantage; or ſhould betray, in any manner whatever, the ſentiments he had overheard, or which had been imparted to him in ſocial confidence. What then, in the preſent ſtate of improvement, when a keener ſenſibility of moral feeling may be expected, and, conſequently, when efforts of ſuch greater profligacy muſt be requiſite to ſuppreſs theſe feelings—what muſt be the depravity of that wretch, who prowls from place to place, from lurking hole to lurking hole, and from circle to circle, to overhear and betray the converſation in which the honeſt and unſuſpecting part of his fellow-creatures may occaſionally indulge their feelings. Can we wonder, when hardened to this degree of depravity, by the vicious encouragement held out by one part of ſociety, for the ruin and deſtruction of another, if they ſhould advance one ſtep further in the path of vice and infamy, and, to gratify an inveterate malice, or encreaſe the wages of their iniquity, bring forward *accuſations deſtitute of all foundation in truth*, and ſacrifice on the altar of their infernal idols, all whom perſonal reſentment or party rancour may have rendered obnoxious to their machinations. That ſuch has been the conduct of informers in other ages and countries cannot be denied: the page of hiſtory affirms it. And that it has, in more inſtances than one, been the caſe with reſpect to the victims now confined in *our Baſtiles*, there can be but little doubt. And how ſhould it be otherwiſe? From an informer to a perjurer is but a ſingle gradation; and who that is already thus deep in infamy

famy will refuſe to take another plunge to make himſelf more ſecure of the *reward**?

I do not mean directly to charge with the crime of deſignedly encouraging falſe accuſation, the perſons who have ſet on foot this deteſtable ſyſtem: though men who are anxiouſly engaged in the purſuit of their own private intereſts or ambition, are ſeldom very nice in the means of their attainment—and many of them might not perhaps bluſh to wiſper in the ear of a truſty confidant,

" Tell the words
" You brought me, th' other day, of Silius:
" *Add ſomething to them.*" JONSON'S SEJANUS.

But whether ſuch inſtructions were ever communicated or not by Mr. Reeves and his aſſociators, or by the treacherous and inſolent SEJANUS of this country, before whoſe *nigh-expiring* dignity they bend their minds in ſuch diſhonourable ſervitude, is not the queſtion to ſociety. We muſt look to the conſequences of *meaſures*, not to the nice ſhades and diſcriminations of progreſſive turpitude in the characters of *men*: and it was their duty, as the grand movers of the infernal engine thus ſet to work, for

* This reaſoning was exemplified upon my Trial, by *Taylor*, alias *Roberts*, whoſe whole teſtimony was a tiſſue of barefaced forgeries and miſrepreſentations, the greater part of which could have been confuted by perſons who were in court when he gave his teſtimony. One of the things neareſt to truth that he uttered was that which predicted the approaching diſſolution of deſpotiſm throughout Europe: yet, the paſſage to which this referred had been taken down by Ramſey, the ſhort hand writer, who happened to be preſent when the Lecture was delivered; and he has declared that it was *eſſentially* different from what this worthy confidant of gentlemen high in office repreſented.——My Council, however, were of opinion, that, having proved two diſtinct perjuries againſt him, to enter into a confutation of particulars, which, if true, would have amounted only to ſedition, and therefore *had nothing to do with a charge of High Treaſon*, would have been an inſult to the underſtanding of the Jury.

the annihilation of political truth, and the reſtraint of intellectual improvement, to conſider, before the experiment was adopted, what were the miſchiefs to the morals and happineſs of ſociety, which were likely to be effected by its operations? Had this ſubject been fully and fairly conſidered; had all the conſequences been duly reflected upon, of tearing aſunder the ties and moral obligations between man and man, and ſetting *neighbour againſt neighbour and friend againſt friend*, for purpoſes of political treachery, I am ſcarcely inclined to believe, that a being ſo profligate could have been found (even among the governors of this degraded country) as to have been the author of ſo monſtrous an innovation: an innovation worſe than every thing which the authors of it *pretend* to dread—which introduces, wherever it is adopted, a ſyſtem of ANARCHY of the moſt deplorable nature—an ANARCHY OF MORALS! ten thouſand times more deſtructive than the moſt abſolute POLITICAL ANARCHY that ever exiſted:—the fact being, that *political anarchy* is no further, in reality, an evil, than as the *moral ſyſtem* is vitiated and imperfect; while, on the other hand, if the *principles of morality* are once overthrown, nothing like political ſecurity can poſſibly be expected in any ſtate. But, alas! the dog-ſtar of alarm rages in our political hemiſphere; and our intellects, already impaired by the vices of luxury and diſſipation, are unable to reſiſt the infectious mania. Behold to what a deplorable ſtate of degradation we are already ſubjugated;

" We that (within theſe fourſcore years) were born
" Free, equal, lords of the triumphed world,
" And knew no maſters, but affections,
" To which betraying firſt our liberties,
" We ſince became the ſlaves to one man's pride,
" And now to many."

I ſhall

I ſhall not at preſent enter into the enquiry concerning the proper deſerts of thoſe by whom a ſyſtem of this deſcription may be introduced or ſupported: It would be a painful task. A good citizen will be more deſirous of informing than of irritating the public mind: more anxious to impart the wiſdom that ſoftens to benevolence, than to inflame the paſſions that urge to coercion and revenge. Philoſophy leads us to conſider men, in a conſiderable degree at leaſt, as the creatures of ſurrounning circumſtances; and conſequently to attribute leſs of criminality to their motives, than the generality of ſpectators are inclined to ſuppoſe. Let us be ſticklers for principles; not advocates for men and parties:—oppoſers of vice and tyranny; not the perſonal enemies even of the oppreſſors.

Putting, therefore, the deſerts of individuals entirely out of queſtion, I ſhall obſerve that ſince we have the misfortune to live in an age and country in which profligate aſſociations have introduced ſuch a ſyſtem among us, we have the better reaſon for deporting ourſelves with peculiar circumſpection; that we may baffle, if poſſible, the machinations by which every friend of liberty and mankind is ſurrounded. Let us not, however, miſtake cowardice for prudence. The fact is, if we love liberty, and would purſue it, Raſhneſs itſelf is not ſo far removed from Prudence as timidity. Had we never fled from our poſt during the alarm ſpread by a certain proclamation; had we with *peaceable, but ſteady* reſolution, oppoſed our ſentiments to the inquiſitorial aſſociations of *pariſh officers, and money jobbers*, the preſent calamitous war had been avoided, and the hopes of parliamentary reform had not been fruſtrated. We excuſe ourſelves, it is true, and hide our timidity, by talking about the times; and thus countenance, in ſome degree, the pretences of the

miniſterial faction, by ſuppoſing that there can be times in which the diſcharge of our duties to ſociety can be improper. But all times are in reality the ſame, if we have the virtue to make them ſo.

" Times?—The men,
" The men are not the ſame: 'tis we are baſe,
" Poor, and degenerate from th' exalted ſtrain
" Of our great fathers. Where is now the ſoul
" Of godlike Cato? he, that durſt be good,
" When Cæſar durſt be evil; and had power,
" As not to live his ſlave, to die his maſter?
" Or where the conſtant Brutus, that (being proof
" Againſt all charm of benefits) did ſtrike
" So brave a blow into the monſter's heart
" That ſought unkindly to enſlave his country?
" O they are fled the light: thoſe mighty ſpirits
" Lie rak'd up with their aſhes in their urns;
" And not a ſpark of their eternal fire
" Glows in a preſent boſom. All's but blaze,
" Flaſhes, and ſmoke, wherewith we labour ſo.
" There's nothing Roman in us: nothing good
" Gallant or great: 'tis true as Cordus ſays,
" Brave Caſſius was the laſt of all that race."

—JONSON'S SEJANUS.

This picture, although the reſemblance is but too near, is not entirely applicable to the preſent poſture of affairs. Our race of heroes is not entirely extinct. The laſt of Britons is not yet mouldering in the grave. Still we have a *Gerald* and a *Sinclair*, who, unawed by the perſecuting hand of power, have repaired to the unrelenting tribunal of Scotland, to receive—not the dubious iſſue of an impartial trial, but the certain ſeverity of a cruel ſentence. Still we have a *Margarot*—" *a ſecond Sidney!*" bravely ſuffering—(if *ſuffering* that can be called which is endured with ſuch heroic cheerfulneſs) the accumulated ignominy of dungeons, fetters, and invective calumny; and with a patriotic firmneſs, that emulates the boaſts of ancient virtue, encountering

tering the full malignity of an UNCONSTITUTIONAL SENTENCE, which is to baniſh him for fourteen years, among felons and malefactors, to the diſtant and inhoſpitable ſhores of New Holland, for propoſing a more intimate union between the friends of liberty in the ſouthern and northern portions of Britain. And I hope and truſt that, in ſo glorious a cauſe, there are hundreds—thouſands who will ſtep forward, whenever opportunity ſhall permit, and expoſe themſelves to equal danger, in a cauſe of ſo much virtue, utility and glory.

Yes—undaunted and enlightened patriot! whoſe voice has ever been uplifted, whoſe intereſts have been ſo generouſly neglected, and whoſe perſonal liberty, and endearments of ſocial life have ſo cheerfully been ſacrified for that ſacred cauſe which ſhall flouriſh by thy perſecution, and triumph by thy martyrdom!—Yes—glorious patriot! there ſhall be found—and the tyrants of the earth ſhall ſee it, and ſhall tremble!—there ſhall be found (the hour is at hand that ſhall verify the prediction) thouſands—and tens of thouſands of enlightened citizens, who, warmed to generous enthuſiaſm by thy virtues, ſhall avow to the very teeth of thy oppreſſors, the incontrovertible truths which have plucked down upon thy head the vengeance of an inſolent and unprincipled faction!—a faction, once the pretended advocates of thoſe very doctrines which they now perſecute with ſuch unbluſhing impudence,—ſuch ſanguinary and inſatiable fury! The voice of general indignation already begins to articulate, in tones indeed "*not loud but deep;*"—tones that expreſs the internal agitation of the ſoul, and are prophetic of the audible murmur that muſt ſoon awaken the attention of thoſe who at preſent pretend to regard our reaſonings and our remonſtrances with contempt.—— Falſe alarms and inquiſitorial aſſociations may appal awhile

awhile a wondering and deluded nation: but, "O "BRAVE BRITAIN! there is life in't yet!"—The ſpirit of a people ſo enlightened, and *once* ſo full of the generous pride of liberty, cannot be long ſuppreſſed: The genuine voice of the nation muſt ſoon be heard.—I need not tell you within the walls of what aſſembly it is NOT to be expected to reſound. The real voice of the nation muſt ſoon be heard; and the promoters of *unconſtitutional oppreſſion* muſt tremble at the ſhout. Then ſhall thy manly virtue meet with the applauſe it merits, and thy return to this inſulted country ſhall be as glorious to thyſelf and the friends of Liberty, as thy departure is in reality diſgraceful to thoſe *ſhort-ſighted* enemies who exult in thy perſecution.

CITIZENS!

This is not the rant of inconſiderate enthuſiaſm, but the reſult of ſome acquaintance with the generous feelings of a people whom ſome would guide and direct (I ought to ſay drive and harraſs) without any other acquaintance with their diſpoſitions than ſuch as may be imparted by Spies and Eaves Droppers, who have an intereſt to deceive, becauſe their ſalaries depend upon keeping their employers in good humour. Neither is it the cant of faction —the purchaſed fable of ſome tool of Party. *I am a SANS CULOTTE!—one of thoſe who think the happineſs of millions of more conſequence than the aggrandiſement of any party junto! or, in other words, an advocate for the rights and happineſs of thoſe who are languiſhing in want and nakedneſs! (for this is my interpretation of a ſans culotte:—the thing in reality which Whigs* PRETEND *to be!)* Neither is it the ebullition of private partiality. Between this generous martyr and myſelf there have exiſted no private bonds of gratitude and attachment—no other tie or connection than that which has been created by the conſciouſneſs

conſciouſneſs that both were preſſing forward in different departments, but in the ſame common cauſe. Even a *political* intercourſe has ſcarcely ſubſiſted between us—my name having been enrolled in the ſociety of whoſe confidence he has ſhewn himſelf ſo eminently worthy, juſt at the eventful epocha of his miſſion to the Convention at Edinburgh.

But the events of the laſt four or five months have drawn forth the exertions of the friends of liberty, and ſhewn the characters of men, both the *mock Patriots* and the *real*, in their proper colours. It is within that ſpace of time, that my attachment for the *Sidney of the British Convention* has bloſſomed and ripened. I ſpeak of him only as I have ſeen him *in his actions;* and I have ſeen his actions through no other medium of partiality than that which is natural to two men, purſuing by correſpondent means, the ſame important object, in which they are mutually convinced the *happineſs* and *virtue* of mankind are involved.

Contemplating him through this medium of his public conduct, and adding to theſe conſiderations, the *heroic cheerfulneſs*, the *manly ſerenity* of deportment, which he has ſo conſiſtently and ſo unaffectedly diſplayed, it is impoſſible to hear the name of Margarot, or call his image to remembrance, without feeling a glow of enthuſiaſm: without being convinced that there is no true patriot who really knows his worth, but who would cheerfully ſhare the fate he is going to encounter. For myſelf, I hope I ſee the path that *honor* and *virtue* have chalked out before me; and that my mind is fortified to purſue whatever conduct the future combinations of events may dictate for the public ſervice; but, if ever the time of deſpondency ſhould come (though I confeſs at preſent I diſcover no ſymptoms of its approach) when the ſinews of patriotic exer-

tion

tion may relax without criminality, and leave the hopeleſs cauſe of Britiſh Liberty to the blind dominion of Chance; better—ten thouſand times better would it be to go voluntary, and ſelf willed victims to a ſimilar tranſportation, and enjoy, amidſt the inhoſpitable regions of New Holland, the ſociety of a *Margarot* and a *Skirving*, a *Muir*, a *Palmer*, and a *Gerrald*, than remain in a country, which, without ſome ſtrong, ſome marked and general expreſſion of diſapprobation and reſentment, could ſubmit to their unmerited exile.

In the mean time every individual may do ſomething in the ſervice of the cauſe for which theſe glorious martyrs are ſuffering. We have Virtue and Reaſon on our ſide; and theſe, if their friends are at once *active*, *vigilant* and *prudent*, cannot fail of ultimate triumph over the arts of falſhood and corruption.

Let us ſpeak truth, then, with boldneſs, and cultivate it with inceſſant diligence; but let us ſpeak with all the circumſpection we are maſters of; that as our views are peaceable and honeſt, our conduct may, if poſſible, eſcape miſrepreſentation: and this not becauſe we ſhrink from oppreſſion and perſecution (for to ſuffer in a good cauſe is, in fact, a glorious diſtinction) but becauſe whenever ignorance and miſery are ſo prevalent as in this unhappy country, the real friend of mankind has duties of an active nature calling inceſſantly for his exertions, which cannot be duly attended to within the gloomy confines of a priſon. Not that I mean to inſinuate, that even in a dungeon an enlightened patriot need be uſeleſs to ſociety. Mind!—that almoſt omnipotent faculty of man! ſuperior to the malice of perſecution—defies the chains and dungeons of the oppreſſor; and while the body ſtill languiſhes in confinement, ſpurning the walls and barriers that endeavour

deavour to enſlave it, ſcatters its emanations far and wide. The reſources, the conſolations, the functions of this divine principle, are ſo innumerable, that it is ſcarcely poſſible to deviſe a ſituation where life can be ſupported, in which, if we do not find ſome means to benefit mankind, and to enjoy ourſelves, it muſt not be attributed to ourſelves: to our want of fortitude, of activity, or virtue. *Voltaire*, in the ſolitary dungeons of the Baſtille, from which he never expected to be releaſed, compoſed a part of his celebrated poem, the *Henriade; Boethius*, in confinement equally cruel, and in conſtant apprehenſion of the executioner, wrote his *Conſolations of Philoſophy*; *Epictetus*, the philoſopher, and the fabuliſt *Æſop*, in the condition of perſonal ſlavery, kept their minds ſtill in freedom and produced the immortal works, which, to the end of time, will continue to benefit the world. In ſhort, there is no condition, *but a ſtate of indolence and diſſipation*, that may not be rendered uſeful:—no ſituation ſo abject or ſo hopeleſs, in which the *mind* may not create reſources: aud though no man would wiſh to be *driven* to theſe expedients, yet rather than ſtalk about in uſeleſs inanity, and look our fellow creatures fearfully in the face, without daring to exchange the ſentiments of our hearts, it would be well to court the chains and dungeons of the oppreſſor, where, to our fellow priſoners, or to the ſolitary walls, we might communicate our thoughts with freedom. For it is better, if I may adopt ſo ludicrous a figure—ten times better, to be immured in a Baſtille, than to have the Baſtille in one's mouth, to lock up the tongue from all communication with the heart.

But there is, perhaps, in the generality of inſtances, a guarded and temperate mode of delivery, which (by directing our indignation againſt the oppreſſion, rather than petulantly ſingling forth particular indi-

viduals

dividuals as the oppreſſors) has more effect in removing the prejudices, and allaying the apprehenſions, of our antagoniſts, than all that "ſound and fury," frequently "ſignifying nothing," which is apt to lay us open to the ſnares of the enemy, and retard the important improvements we have in view.

This maxim, however, I beg to be underſtood, as intended to reſtrain our paſſions, and correct our intemperance only, and not as curbing in any reſpect the free ſpirit of inquiry, once the boaſt of the Britiſh Conſtitution; and, without the ample indulgence of which it is impoſſible that any human effort ſhould conduct us to the ſublime principles of truth and virtue: from which, and from which alone, thoſe bleſſings and that wiſdom are to be expected, which ſmooth the aſperities of this world of foibles and imperfections, and which may perhaps conduct us in the end, to the height of intelligent perfection, and univerſal benevolence, of which hitherto we have not even the moſt diſtant idea. Then, perhaps, ſhall the party cabals, the hoſtile views, and national enmities which have hitherto deſtroyed the tranquillity, and thinned the population of the globe, be removed and annihilated. Glory ſhall alone be placed in intellect and virtue; and the only ſtrife between man and man be who ſhall beſt deſerve the love and admiration of his fellow creatures—or, in other words, who ſhall diffuſe the bleſſings of his exertions through the wideſt circle, and be—*not* the *greateſt* DESTROYER, but the *greateſt* BENEFACTOR of the world.

Nor let us regard as viſionary this picture of the future advantages of cultivated intellect: for if (as no one can doubt who is at all acquainted with the hiſtory of the world and the diſcoveries of modern navigators) man was originally a ſavage, little better than

than the brute creation; and if under all the diſadvantages which confined the ſpirit of enquiry to a few individuals, and a few objects only, he has arrived, by the mere force of *aſſociated intellect*, to his preſent ſtate of improvement and civilization; what but cowardice and irrational bigotry can lead us to ſuppoſe that he may not ſtill go on to further meliorations of his condition, and that a ſpirit of enquiry, ſtill bolder and more unreſtrained, may not be productive of effects ſtill more important to the human mind.

LECTURE

30 MR 64

LECTURE THE SECOND.

SKETCHES

OF THE

History of Prosecutions

FOR

POLITICAL OPINION;

PART THE FIRST.

WITH

STRICTURES

ON THE

LATE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Court of Justiciary in Scotland.

Alas, poor England! what will become of thee, if thou look not sooner into thine own Privileges, and maintain not thine own lawful Liberty.

PRYNN's Harangue from the Pillory. STATE TRIALS.

THE THIRD EDITION.

Dedication to the Second Edition.

TO THE

TWO RESPECTABLE GRAND JURIES

OF THE

MANOR AND LIBERTY OF THE SAVOY,

WHO, BY THEIR SPIRITED ADHERENCE
TO TRUTH AND JUSTICE,
AND THEIR DETERMINATION TO BE DIRECTED
BY THE EVIDENCE OF THEIR OWN SENSES,
BAFFLED THE INSIDIOUS MACHINATIONS
OF THE TOOLS OF A STATE INQUISITOR,
AND RESCUED THE AUTHOR
FROM THE DISAPPOINTED GRIPE OF PERSECUTION,
THIS SECOND EDITION OF A LECTURE
ON A SUBJECT EMINENTLY INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT,
IS DEDICATED,
BY THEIR GRATEFUL FELLOW-CITIZEN,

JOHN THELWALL.

LECTURE THE SECOND.

Proſecutions for Political Opinion.

CITIZENS!

"THE art of drawing indictments, and contriving "innuendoes, and ſo manufacturing libels," ſays Mr. Gurney, in his manly and eloquent defence of Citizen Eaton, "is indeed a curious art;" and, as it has lately flouriſhed in a very extraordinary degree, it may be worth while to enquire into the hiſtory of its riſe and progreſs, and the means by which it has attained its preſent celebrity. Did the plan of this courſe of Lectures, and the neceſſary attention to variety permit, I ſhould be deſirous of doing this in a very ample manner, ſo as to lay the whole maſs of iniquity before the public in one collective view; being thoroughly perſuaded that the complete proſpect of the *folly* and *wickedneſs* of proſecutions for opinion, and the conſequent miſery in which they muſt of neceſsity involve ſo many of the moſt virtuous of mankind, would convince every candid mind, of the immediate neceſſity of putting a period to a ſyſtem at once ſo impotent and iniquitous. But this is a taſk much too elaborate to be attempted on the preſent occaſion.

The records contained in ſo many immenſe folios of ſtate trials, the hiſtorical facts with which thoſe records are connected, and the innumerable *trials which propagate the ſeditions*, and will *perpetuate the memory of the perſecutions*, even of the preſent reign, are not to be compreſſed into a ſingle lecture, or even courſe of lectures, ſuch as it is my purpoſe to deliver.

The ſlighteſt ſketch, however, of the ſubject, if I am fortunate enough to be at all judicious in my ſelection, or pertinent in my remarks, cannot fail of being eminently uſeful; eſpecially as it will illuſtrate in a conſiderable degree, what is the *real* difference (if *any)* with reſpect to POLITICAL LIBERTY, between the preſent ſituation of this country, and that of our anceſtors in the diſgraceful and tyrannic reigns of the Stewarts. It will ſhew us, alſo, in ſome degree, what were the boaſted advantages of the REVOLUTION in 1688; and what proviſions, neceſſary to the enjoyment of RATIONAL FREEDOM, were neglected at that memorable period.

In looking over the records of theſe events, the firſt circumſtance which muſt ſtrike even the moſt ſuperficial obſerver, is the vaſt diſproportion between the political proſecutions of ancient and modern times. Reign after reign, and year after year, teems with increaſing fruitfulneſs of perſecution.

The evil is conſtantly extending:—ſpreading itſelf (if ſuch a tranſition of metaphor may be admitted) like an inverted pyramid, and threatening, if the progreſs ſhould continue in a ſimilar ratio, to eclipſe entirely the light of rational enquiry, and leave to the ignorant and affrighted crowd beneath nothing but the gloomy ſhadow of an ill concerted ſtructure, ready every inſtant to cruſh them with its enormous weight.

From

From the commencement of the reign of Richard I. to the death of Mary, a period of one hundred and eighty years, the State Trials preſent us with but five inſtances of political proſecutions; and the firſt of theſe is againſt the judges and miniſters of a weak and obſtinate prince, for perverting the courſe of juſtice, and appropriating to their own perſonal intereſt, and that of their relations and dependants, thoſe public treaſures which ought to have been devoted to the protection and happineſs of the people: a crime not always enquired into with the keeneſt avidity, nor chaſtiſed with the ſincereſt indignation. In ſhort, there is reaſon to believe that if offences of this nature had always been ſcrutiniſed with the ſame ſeverity which has been exerciſed againſt ſeditious allegories, and libels againſt game cocks, the decrees of vindictive juſtice might have ſent to Botany Bay, or to the ſcaffold, ſome of the moſt arrogant miniſters that ever commanded the confidence of a Houſe of Commons.

The reign of Elizabeth alone, a period of only five and forty years, exhibits a black collection of eleven important trials; among which we have ſome as diſgraceful to the Engliſh character as any that ſtand upon record—ſome recent examples of lawleſs perſecution alone excepted.

Among the ſhining tranſactions of this reign, ſo eminently extolled by the zeal of Proteſtant writers, we may particularly mention the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots (whoſe greateſt crime, againſt her *couſin Queen*, at leaſt, was that of excelling in all thoſe accompliſhments of mind and perſon to which the coarſe and arrogant Elizabeth ſo ridiculouſly pretended) and the perſecution and capital condemnation of John Udall, a Puritan miniſter, for *feloniouſly* publiſhing his opinion (for *libel* was not then in faſhion, and *felony* was the denomination of crime

he was charged with) concerning the religious eſtabliſhment of the times.

James I. who commenced his career of tyranny with procuring the illegal condemnation of that great ornament of letters and his country, Sir Walter Raleigh (whom, ſeveral years after, he diſpatched by a legalized murder) did not fail to improve upon the example which Elizabeth had ſet him. Nor did *baby* Charles, as his father uſed ſo accurately to call him (for his character never attained the ſteady conſiſtency of manhood) reſign the dear prerogative of political proſecution: ſo that we find the State Trials in thirty-five years, to the 14th of Charles the Firſt, ſwelled to more than double the extent of all which had preceded during the ſpace of two hundred and twenty-four years; reckoning thoſe for libel and ſedition only: for I exclude thoſe of a leſs political nature, though *they* aroſe, alſo, as in reality all *crimes* and *proſecutions* do, from the particular vices of the exiſting government.

Soon after this (in the year 1640) proſecutions began to change ſides; and from thence to the *unhappy* RESTORATION in 1660, Mr. Gurney would have found no occaſion to complain that political proſecutions were alone directed againſt thoſe who "reflected, or were ſuppoſed to reflect upon the regal or ariſtocratical branch of the conſtitution;" and that "if a man would but exalt theſe, at the expence of the democratical part, he might libel the conſtitution with impunity." "THE MAJESTY OF THE PUBLIC," had for once its jealous guardians and avengers. "The ſacred rights of the people" could no longer "be inſulted, degraded, and vilified" with impunity, while for every "ſarcaſm that fell on the power and authority of kings or nobles," the thunder of "miniſterial vengeance was inſtantly hurled at the head of the unfortunate offender.

« offender." Democracy triumphed for a while over the tyranny of courts: miniſters experienced the day of retribution; and the ermined robes, and ſanctimonious trappings of Judges and ambitious prelates, could no longer protect them from the puniſhments to which their official libels againſt public liberty ſo juſtly entitled them.

[* It muſt be admittedthat the prevailing party did not enjoy their triumph with the moſt uniform moderation.—I paſs without cenſure the puniſhment of the Judges and miniſters of Charles; nor can I perceive how any man can be an advocate for any degree of Liberty whatever, or even a friend to the preſent family on the Throne, who condemns the execution of Charles himſelf; whatever he may think of the *manner of conducting* the trial. For what is to prevent that Monarch from becoming abſolute whom neither the aggregate nor repreſentative body of the people can control or puniſh? and by what title does the houſe of Brunſwick hold the Britiſh Sceptre, if it had not been forfeited by the tyranny of the Stewarts †.

But the ſucceeding proſecutions were not all of them equally juſtifiable. Liberality will condemn the treatment and execution of Hamilton; and it is impoſſible to peruſe the Trial of John Lilburne, without admiration of the virtue and energy of the man, abhorrence for the *extravagant* (though by no means *ſingular*) profligacy of the Judges, and contempt for the uſurping and intolerant ſpirit of the exiſting Government.

The erection (after this acquital) of a Revolutionary Tribunal, to try political offenders, *without the*

* The paſſages between crotchets are added in the preſent edition.

† I ſhall treat theſe ſubjects at greater length when I deliver (as I intend ſhortly) the Courſe of Lectures prepared during my confinement in the Tower.

intervention of a Jury, it is impoſſible to reflect upon with patience. It is ſufficiently characteriſtic of that *Coercive Liberty* which the uſurping fragment of a Houſe of Commons, then remaining, was deſirous of impoſing upon the Country.

In ſhort—the fact is incontrovertible, that the Government then eſtabliſhed had not the approbation of the majority of the people; and when that is the caſe, *legalized murders*, and *illegal proſecutions* muſt be the conſequences. Opinion is the ſole prop of all Governments; and when the ſentiment of *approbation* fails, the ſentiment of *terror* muſt be inſpired—or farewell to the tottering fabric. Add to this that the intolerance of religious ſects, and the viſions of Fanaticiſm had poiſoned the judgment and imbittered the ſpirit of the Republicans (as they called themſelves) of the day, and we ſhall wonder no longer at the imperfections of their theory, or the deformities of their practice.]

It is to be obſerved, however, to the honour of theſe times, that no inquiſitorial divan ſearched for innuendoes, and concealed libels, in every little tale and pamphlet. The magnanimity of Cromwell in this particular, might put to ſhame (if their cheeks were liable to bluſh) the petty jealouſy of hereditary princes. "If my government is made to ſtand," ſays he, returning to Harrington his *Oceana* (a work written in vindication of thoſe Republican principles which the uſurpations of Cromwell had overthrown) "it will never be ſhaken with paper bullets."

Cromwell was a man of ſenſe, and had ſome foundation for this manly confidence. Though a uſurper and a hypocrite, who, after bringing the tyrant to the block, had the art and management to fruſtrate the virtuous deſigns of the brave Republicans of that æra, yet his reign was unſullied by any act of folly or oppreſſion. Public juſtice was never adminiſtered with

with greater purity, nor public happineſs better protected, than under his adminiſtration. He had, therefore, but little to fear from libels and ſeditious paſquinades, which muſt always have truth upon their ſide, if we expect them to take effect. "In no time," ſays Burnet, who is no very partial witneſs, "the "Highlands were kept in better order than during "the uſurpation." He might have ſaid the ſame of the whole empire. "There was good juſtice done, "and vice ſuppreſſed and puniſhed; ſo that we al-"ways reckon thoſe eight years of uſurpation, a "time of great peace and proſperity." The true reaſon this why the State Trials exhibit, during the *protectorate*, no ſingle inſtance of proſecution for libel or ſeditious converſation. The cavaliers, indeed, agitated the country with repeated ſtruggles, to reſtore the golden calf of their idolatry; and the common crime of all governments, I mean the infliction of a violent death, fell upon the necks of ſome whoſe inveteracy admitted no medium between the block and the final overthrow of the power againſt which they attempted to riſe in arms: but, in other reſpects, the adminiſtration of Cromwell was not only equitable, but as honourable and happy as it was glorious.

In ſhort—It is no libel, I hope, againſt our *happy* government, though it is certainly truth—that, whatever *monarchiſts* and *divine-rights men* may inculcate to the contrary, in plays, romance books, and mock hiſtories, even uſurpations (I ſpeak not of uſurpations effected by *foreign mercenaries)* are generally more favourable to the ſpirit of liberty, and the happineſs of the people, than the regular ſucceſſion of hereditary monarchy. The uſurper is generally promoted by ſome perſonal merit; the conſciouſneſs of which elevates his ſoul above the mean and paltry jealouſies, from which ſo many acts of tyranny

tyranny and oppreſſion will be found to originate. Beſides, being unfortified by any of the ſuperſtitious prejudices which rivet the attachment of a people to their hereditary ſovereigns, they are obliged to court that popularity, by the wiſdom and generoſity of their proceedings, which the others lay claim to, by virtue of their birth; and to ſupply, by attention to the public welfare, the deficiency of legal title. Add to this, that a conſiderable part, at leaſt, of the people, muſt have given their conſent and aſſiſtance to the elevation of the uſurper, while the *hereditary* DOLT may take poſſeſſion of the ſeat of power, in *open contempt* of the whole; and may fortify the ſuperſtition that upholds his *divine authority* with the wealth extorted by his rapacity from the labour of thoſe whom he oppreſſes.—Let me not be miſtaken, as an advocate for *uſurpation*. The price is always greater than the change is worth; and of all the different kinds of *regal* government (the whole queſtion conſidered) hereditary monarchy is decidedly the beſt.

From the reſtoration of Charles II. the evil I am inveſtigating flouriſhed with encreaſing malignity. He *promiſed*, indeed, a general indemnity; but no ſooner was he fixed in the ſeat of power, than he began to employ all the engines of deſpotiſm for the deſtruction of the friends of liberty, and to glut his kingly appetite for vengeance; ſo that many of the perſons moſt inſtrumental in his re-eſtabliſhment, began to repent of the evil they had brought upon the country. "When the Earl of Southampton," ſays Dr. Burnett, "came to ſee what he was like to "prove, he ſaid once in great wrath to Chancellor "Hyde" (who had been one of the chief inſtruments towards the King's being reſtored without treaty or reſtrictions) "it was to him they owed all "they either felt or feared; for, if he had not poſ-

"ſeſſed

" ſeſſed them in all his letters with ſuch an opinion " of the King, they would have taken care to have " put it out of his power either to do himſelf or " them any miſchief, which was like to be the effect " of truſting him ſo entirely." *Burnet's Own Times.*

From this time we muſt drop all pretence of individual enumeration, and count the political proſecutions of the times, not by the numbers who ſuffered but by the unwieldy volumes that record their condemnation Party waged war againſt party, and faction was glutted with the blood of faction, and two huge folios of a thouſand pages *imperfectly* record the perſecuting tyranny of the Houſe of Stewart. Yet, even in the times of theſe lawleſs tyrants, I have met with no ſingle inſtance of tranſportation to the antipodes for fourteen years, for writing or ſpeaking in favour of political reform. To theſe William III. " upon " whom as upon a *mendicant* our anceſtors beſtowed " the crown of theſe realms" added another enormous volume; and the ſame ſpirit of faction and perſecution ſtill continuing, we find the cloſe of the reign of George I. marked by the completion of the ſixth of theſe ſupendous monuments of political intolerance, and proſcription of human reaſon.

I make this calculation from the edition of State Trials which lay before me at the time I was preparing this lecture. But upon comparing them with the hiſtory of the country, and the notes and references I thought it neceſſary to appeal to, I find it far from a perfect collection; and if I had time and opportunity to make a more correct ſtatement, the growing enormity would be ſtill more glaring. But were we to extend the calculations to the preſent time, what would then appear the magnitude of the evil? Were we to enumerate only the proſecutions for political opinion—for libel and ſedition, during the laſt four and thirty years—nay, were we only to bring

bring in one collected maſs the proſcriptions and proſecutions, the trials, fines and puniſhments, the diſcord and ruin among families, the diſtreſs and miſery, nay, in ſome inſtances, death—the worſt of deaths, the murderous diſeaſes of a gaol—which have been inflicted upon individuals during the laſt eighteen months, the tale would, I am ſure, be too monſtrous to be borne in ſilence; and the reflection of the nation would be awakened to the purſuit of ſome adequate remedy to ſo enormous an evil.

The latter part of this taſk appears to me of ſuch conſiderable importance that I cannot but ſeriouſly recommend it to the attention of ſome perſon who has leiſure and opportunity to collect the neceſſary materials; and I will be bold to ſay that ſuch a catalogue of political and moral depravity as theſe proceedings would preſent, has never yet been exhibited in any period of Britiſh Hiſtory; nor could a publication be produced that would ſo deeply affect the public mind as the inquiſitorial hiſtory of Britain, from the firſt proclamation againſt the writings of PAINE to the condemnation of JOSEPH GERRALD.

To return more immediately to my ſubject: it is natural to the human mind, upon obſerving this diſproportion of events at different periods, to enquire into the cauſes of ſuch diſproportion; and the queſtion naturally reſulting from the preceding ſtatement, or delineation of the general outlines of this hiſtory is, how it ſhould happen, that, in proportion as the world grows civilized and refined, the malignity of perſecution for opinion ſhould apparently increaſe, and Governments hold out increaſing terrors to retard the benign progreſs of human intellect.

I am aware, Citizens, and I wiſh to take no undue advantages, that there is ſome deluſion in theſe appearances—that the records of earlier times are not

ſo

ſo well preſerved as of thoſe that are more recent; that military executions, at former periods frequently prevented the neceſſity of legal condemnations; and the ſword was frequently drawn to decide thoſe differences of political opinion, which now vent themſelves in a libel, and terminate in a ſentence to Newgate, or Botany Bay. Attached by no prejudices to the manners and inſtitutions of antiquity, and uninfluenced by any deſire to impoſe upon you by the cant of old-faſhioned moraliſts, about the degeneracy of a world, which, in reality, I believe in a ſtate of progreſſion and improvement, I am ready to admit the force of theſe arguments. When men are too ignorant for political inveſtigation, they reſign themſelves to the dominion of their paſſions, and bearing oppreſſion with an abject ſpirit, till human ſufferance can endure no longer, ſpeak no ſedition but with the pike or battle-ax in their hands, and publiſh no libels but what are written in the blood of their oppreſſors. When this is the ſtate of ſociety I grant that proſecutions for libel muſt of neceſſity be rare; but tumult and rebellion will be proportionately frequent. And as *privation* and *negation* are eſſentially the ſame, and may tend but too naturally to the ſame lamentable conſequences, I would make this an aditional argument for exhorting thoſe who are in power to relinquiſh their mad project of ſuppreſſing the progreſs of free enquiry, did I not know that ſuch a project muſt of neceſſity prove abortive, and that "the preſs is, in reality, an engine ſufficiently ſubtile to elude the malice of the moſt vigilant police."

But the argument concerning the turbulent ignorance of the times can apply only to the firſt of thoſe periods into which I have divided my ſtatement. The age of feudal violence and perſonal ſlavery had given way before the aſcent of Elizabeth to the throne;

throne; and the thick clouds of ignorance were beginning to diſperſe. A new complexion of affairs preſents itſelf to the hiſtorian in the reign of Henry VII. a faint dawning of which had made its appearance in the times of Henry IV. and V. but had been inveloped again by the ſtorms of civil war that raged between the houſes of York and Lancaſter. This, as it gave a different turn to the purſuits and proſpects of the people, called forth a different ſort of exertion in thoſe to whoſe excluſive privileges and enjoyments this expanſion of intellect threatened to be hoſtile.

"About this period," ſays Hume, at the begin-
" ning of his hiſtory of the ſucceeding reign, "the
" minds of men, throughout all Europe, but eſpe-
" cially in England, ſeem to have undergone a ge-
" neral, but inſenſible revolution. Though letters
" had been revived in the preceding age, they ſeem
" to have been chiefly cultivated by men of ſeden-
" tary profeſſion; nor had they, till now, begun to
" ſpread themſelves in any degree, among men in the
" world. Arts both mechanical and liberal were
" every day receiving great improvements. Navi-
" gation had extended itſelf over the whole globe.
" Travelling was ſecure; and the general ſyſtem of
" politics in Europe was become more enlarged and
" comprehenſive."

" In conſeqnence of this univerſal fermentation,
" the ideas of men enlarged themſelves on all ſides.
" In England the love of freedom, which, unleſs
" checked, flouriſhes extremely in all liberal natures,
" acquired new force, and was regulated by more
" enlarged views, ſuitable to that cultivated under-
" ſtanding, which became every day more com-
" mon among men of birth and education. A fami-
" liar acquaintance with the precious remains of an-
" tiquity, excited in every generous breaſt a paſſion

" for

" for a limited conſtitution, and begat an emulation " of thoſe manly virtues which the Greek and Ro- " man authors, by ſuch animating examples, as well " as pathetic expreſſions, recommend to us."

Then it was that the altered and improved condition of human intellect, induced thoſe ſtate jugglers whoſe oppreſſive privileges were likely to be ſhaken by the growth and exerciſe of theſe new faculties, to invent a new ſpecies of crime, and declare it an offence againſt ſociety for rational beings to exerciſe that underſtanding which God or Nature beſtowed upon them as their diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic. Then it was to adopt the maſterly and accurate language of Mr. Gurney, " when the invention of " printing had introduced political diſcuſſion, and " when *ſeditious publications* (that is to ſay, *publica-* " *tions expoſing the corruptions and abuſes of govern-* " *ment, and the profligacy of miniſters)* made their " appearance," that the firſt ſyſtematic attempt was made to circumſcribe the progreſs of the human mind. " The controul of the preſs was placed in " admirable hands, a licenſer, the king's Attorney " General, and a court of inquiſition called the Star " Chamber. The licenſer was to ſtifle in its birth " every thing obnoxious to the miniſters. But if " any thing happened to eſcape his hands, then the " Attorney General, by his information *ex officio*, " carried the unfortunate author or publiſher" (frequently author, publiſher, and printer altogether) " before the board of inquiſitors, who never failed " to adminiſter a ſentence, adapted by its ſeverity," (as they weakly imagined) " to deter others from ſi- " milar efforts to enlighten the people. It was in " that infernal inquiſition, that the purity of the law " of libel was debauched:" for " the ancient law " of libel," as Mr. Gurney had before obſerved, and as in the progreſs of this examination I ſhall prove,

prove, " did not differ from other criminal law. It " was there that the monſtrous maxim was firſt " broached that *truth* could be a *falſe*, ſcandalous, " and ſeditious libel !!!"

The iniquity, however, in a conſiderable degree defeated itſelf. For not only does the human mind, when not debauched and enervated by long continued luxury, revolt with forceful indignation from the oppreſſions that would chain its faculties—not only does the natural elaſticity of the human character generally riſe with an energy proportioned to the attempts that are made to depreſs it, but the violent and bare-faced injuſtice of the Star Chamber rouſed the general indignation of the people, and " the in- " tolerable oppreſſion of this inquiſition brought on " its *violent*, I cannot ſay untimely death." And notwithſtanding the ſanction which has been given by a large majority in the Houſe of Commons to certain late proceedings, ſuch, ere long, I have little doubt, will be, in ſome meaſure, the fate of the court of juſticiary. From all ranks of people the murmur of indignation begins already to be heard; and the more the point is inveſtigated the greater will be the deteſtation: for never yet have I met with an individual, nor heard of one (out of the Houſe of Commons) how full ſoever of the bitterneſs of invective againſt *Jacobins* and levellers, who would libel his underſtanding by advancing an argument in favour of theſe unprecedented ſentences.

Public opinion is the pillar of every ſpecies and department of government; and a court of judicature (I will not call it a court of juſtice) regarded with ſuch ſentiments as theſe ſentences have inſpired, cannot long continue a court of judicature to any effective purpoſe. When judges, in an enlightened age like this, depart from the moderation, the temper and humanity ſo eſſential to their ſtation, fare-

well

well to the reſpect and veneration without which their office is but a *vacuum*, and themſelves are *non entities*. Deprived of theſe, the ermined robe and enſigns of authority are converted into the trappings of a buffoon; and all that was intended to command our reverence provokes our ridicule and contempt. On the other hand, the characters and conduct of the ſufferers cannot fail of making an impreſſion upon the public mind eminently favourable to the cauſe for which they ſuffer, and ultimately diſgraceful to thoſe who are the authors of their condemnation. The eloquent pleadings of MUIR, the gentle manners and unblemiſhed life of PALMER; the honeſt ſimplicity of SKIRVING, the cheerful fortitude and inflexible perſeverance of MARGAROT, and the torrent of manly and perſuaſive eloquence which rouſed all the noble and generous feelings of an admiring audience at the trial of GERRALD, cannot fail of inſpiring the ſenſations due not only to the individuals who have ſubmitted ſo cheerfully to this martyrdom, but to the juries alſo that could ſhut their ears againſt conviction, and the judge who, like another JEFFERIES, could declare from "the bench that *the purity of their principles was* "*an aggravation of their guilt.*"

The firm and diſintereſted manner in which the laſt of theſe virtuous and gallant Citizens, together with that eſtimable young man Citizen SINCLAIR, with the fate of the other four before their eyes, and without the leaſt proſpect of eſcaping the ſame inhuman ſentence, returned from London to encounter the malice of their proſecutors, will alſo have its weight with every generous mind; and will aſſiſt with ten-fold energy to ſecure the ultimate triumph of liberty, and of theſe her proven champions: for in defiance of all the rancour of political prejudice, it is impoſſible to behold ſuch conſpicuous

magnanimity of principle and conduct without feeling the heart attracted to the *individuals* displaying it, and the *cause* in which it has been displayed.

Citizens!

YOU will pardon, I know, the length of this digression, and rather applaud than censure me for seizing every opportunity of doing justice to the characters of those whose persons are destined to endure so much injustice; and who in the midst of sufferings which would sink the guilty authors of their oppression into feminine weakness and despair, have displayed that manly fortitude—that heroic cheerfulness which impresses the sublime conviction that guilt and weakness alone can in reality be punished; and that to suffer in the cause of liberty is not *sufferance*, but TRIUMPHANT GLORY!

It will be the business, Citizens, of the comparative statement in this course of lectures to shew you that the abolition of the Star Chamber did not effectually remedy the evil. That "unfortunately some of its practices survived it." That the whole of the mischief does not consist in "the Attorney General's "being still allowed to carry his information *ex of-* "*ficio*, into the court of king's bench;" that "the "doctrines of the Star Chamber," though somewhat palliated and disguised, never were compleatly laid aside;—that within the last four and thirty years the whole destructive force of them has been revived, to the great vexation of every advocate of freedom; and that the late libel bill, so violently opposed by the law lords and judges, and so extolled by a parliamentary party, though certainly a step in the progress of improvement, is far from being a complete antidote to the oppression, or from "assuring and con- "firming to every Englishman" a full, fair, and impartial trial "by a jury of his equals, when accused "of having written or published a libel."

The

The line of inveſtigation I meant o purſue will alſo, I believe, convince you that the rouſing of the human faculties from the long lethargy of the middle ages was the real cauſe why *government* was firſt ſtimulated to *invent* the crimes of *libel* and *verbal ſedition;* that the proſecutions for theſe *ſuppoſed crimes* have encreaſed in a direct ratio with the improvements of human intellect, and the wider diffuſion of political truth; and that conſequently, the enormous growth of proſecutions for political opinion within theſe few years is a convincing argument that the principles of real liberty are more generally diffuſed, and more perfectly underſtood than in any former period of hiſtory.

At firſt a few favoured ſons of ſcience and philoſophy, only—"men of genius and of enlarged minds, "adopted the principles of liberty, which were as "yet, pretty much unknown to the generality of the "people. Sir Matthew Hales," ſays Hume, in his hiſtory of James II. "had publiſhed a remonſtrance "againſt the king's conduct towards the parliament "during this year. (1604.) The remonſtrance is "drawn with great force of reaſoning and ſpirit of "liberty; and was the production of Sir Francis "Bacon and Sir Edwin Sandys, two men of the "greateſt parts and knowledge in England. It is "drawn in the name of the parliament; but as there "is no hint of it in the journals, we muſt conclude "either that the authors, ſenſible that the ſtrain of "the piece was much beyond the principles of the "age, had not ventured to preſent it to the houſe, "or that it had been rejected by them." And remonſtrances were not rejected in that reign by the purchaſed majority of a miniſter.

In the reign of Charles I. the light had diffuſed itſelf ſomewhat further; and a great majority of virtuous and intelligent gentlemen in the Houſe of

Commons were animated by a ſtrong deſire of liberty. By the weight of their property and intereſt, as well as by the popular arts they cultivated, they urged on the people to deſigns they were not competent to comprehend, and principles by which they were not prepared to be regulated.

Of the perſecutions of this reign, which *helped forward* their deſigns, I ſhall ſpeak at large hereafter; ſuffice it to ſay at preſent, that though Cromwell's uſurpation checked, in ſome degree, the progreſs of political illumination, theſe principles of liberty were ſtill found to extend themſelves through a wider and a wider circle; and though encreaſing proſecutions continued, from the reſtoration, to mark this progreſs, yet ſo long as the effect continued to be circumſcribed to a particular claſs, the *gentler* arts of corruption were relied upon, as of greater efficacy. But now the great maſs of the people is quickened into mental exiſtence. The ſparks, ſucceſſively ſtruck off in the different ſtruggles and conteſts for the emoluments of this corruption, have flown throughout the whole circle of ſociety; and though the degrees of warmth are diſſimilar, there is ſcarcely an individual, eſpecially in towns and cities, where men are preſſed together, and minds come into immediate contact, that is not in ſome degree animated with the deſire of political enquiry.

To enquire, Citizens, is to know that "LIBERTY *is preferable to* SLAVERY;" and that every being is in reality a *ſlave* who is doomed to inceſſant toil without the privileges of a man: without a voice in thoſe regulations of the country by which his life and induſtry are to be diſpoſed of: without equality of rights, and importance in the political ſcale. When this ſhall be generally underſtood, (and the violent perſecutions of the times may convince us there are ſome who apprehend we are advancing rapidly

to

to that period) then will the nation, politically ſpeaking, be incorruptible (for who ſhall be able to corrupt a whole people?)—Liberty ſhall triumph throughout the country, and the deſpotiſm of courts and miniſters ſhall be no more.

Citizens!

YOU need not be told that the perſecutions directed againſt us are meant to avert this glorious and happy period. But let us be undaunted, be active, and vigilant.—Let us ſeize upon the occaſions as they preſent themſelves, and we ſhall turn theſe very perſecutions to our advantage; and the meaſures that were intended to prevent, ſhall haſten the triumphs of Truth and Reaſon.

In ſupport of this opinion I appeal to the experience of hiſtory; and if an impartial ſtatement of facts ſhould demonſtrate that the opinions againſt which the perſecutions of power have been directed have ultimately prevailed—and that the perſecutors themſelves have been frequently the victims of their own intolerant malignity, though *private friendſhip* may regret the ſacrifices that muſt be made, *public virtue* will have little to fear from the event of any ſtruggle in which the cauſe of liberty may be involved; and the friends of tyranny and ariſtocracy but little foundation to exult in the ſeverities inflicted upon their opponents *.

The firſt attempts made in this country to ſtop the progreſs of inquiry, were thoſe which, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, were inſtituted againſt the Lollards or Proteſtant reformers of the times. And though theſe were of the nature of religious perſecution, and my lecture profeſſes only to treat

* The matter of this diſcourſe was originally delivered in one lecture; but after it was drawn out in its preſent form, it was delivered as two; and the ſecond began with the perſecution of the Lollards.

of proſecutions for political opinion, yet I chooſe to begin with theſe, not only becauſe, equally an enemy to tyranny in every ſhape—to the deſpotiſm of the pulpit, or the deſpotiſm of the throne, I am unwilling to neglect any opportunity of expoſing the intolerance of either, but becauſe I conſider religious perſecution as a part only of the ſyſtem of ſtate craft and oppreſſion.

Every eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of religon, from the beginning of hiſtory to the preſent time, is nothing more than a ſpecies of political-impoſture;—a ſyſtem of artifice to reſtrain the faculties of the people, and keep them in obedience by bugbears which their rulers have almoſt uniformly deſpiſed. For proof of this aſſertion it is not neceſſary to appeal to ancient hiſtory, and to remind you how ſtrictly the philoſophers and ſtateſmen of Greece and Rome conformed to the external worſhip of their reſpective countries, and how completely they deſpiſed them in their hearts. The records of modern times are ſufficient for my purpoſe: and we need but look back to that very age of the Stewarts, into the infamy of whoſe government it is my profeſſed intention to enquire.

Several curious facts illuſtrating the truth of theſe obſervations, with reſpect to the continental princes of thoſe days, are recorded by Burnet, under the title of "Some Paſſages of the Religion of ſome "Princes."—"I will here," ſays he, "tell ſome "particulars with relation to Germany, that Fabri- "cius, the wiſeſt divine I knew among them, told "me he had from Charles Lewis, the Elector Pala- "tine's own mouth. He ſaid, Frederick II. who "firſt reformed the Palatinate, whoſe life is ſo cu- "rioufly writ by Thomas Hubert of Liege, re- "ſolved to ſhake of Popery, and to ſet up Luthe- "raniſm, in his country; but a counſellor of his

"ſaid

" ſaid to him, that the Lutherans would always de-
" pend chiefly on the Houſe of Saxony; ſo it would
" not become him, who was the firſt Elector, to be
" of the ſecond party: it was more for his dignity
" to become a Calviniſt; he would be the head of
" that party; it would give him a great intereſt in
" Switzerland, and make the Hugonots of France,
" and in the Netherlands, depend upon him. He
" was by that determined to declare himſelf for the
" Helvetian confeſſion. But, upon the ruin of his
" family, the Duke of Newburgh had an interview
" with the Elector of Brandenburgh about their
" concerns in Juliers and Cleves: and he perſuaded
" that Elector to turn Calviniſt; for ſince their fa-
" mily was fallen, nothing would more contribute to
" raiſe the other than the eſpouſing that ſide, which
" would naturally come under his protection: but,
" he added, that for himſelf, he had turned Papiſt,
" ſince his principality lay ſo near both Auſtria
" and Bavaria. This that Elector told with a ſort
" of pleaſure, when he made it appear that other
" Princes had no more ſenſe of religion than he
" himſelf had."

And that the ſame political conſiderations mingled themſelves at leaſt with the religion of James, is evident from the following paſſages in Hume, (Hiſt. of Eng. vol. v. p. 520 and 523). " The more he knew
" the puritanical clergy, the leſs favour he bore
" them. He had remarked in their Scots brethren
" a violent turn towards republicaniſm, and a zea-
" lous attachment to civil liberty; principles nearly
" allied to that religious enthuſiaſm with which they
" were actuated. He had found, that the ſame lofty
" pretenſions which attended them in their familiar
" addreſſes to their Maker, of whom they believed
" themſelves the peculiar favourites, induced
" them to uſe the utmoſt freedoms with their earth-

" ly ſovereign. It [illegible] equently been the practice
" of puritanic[illegible] to form together certain
" aſſemblies, w[illegible]alled Propheſyings; where
" alternately, a[illegible]by the Spirit, they diſplayed
" their pious z[illegible]prayers and exhortations, and
" raiſed their own enthuſiaſm as that of their au-
" dience, to the higheſt pitch, from that ſocial con-
" tagion which has ſo mighty an influence on holy
" fervours, and from the mutual emulation which
" aroſe in thoſe trials of religious eloquence. Such
" dangerous ſocieties had been ſuppreſſed by Eli-
" zabeth; and the miniſters in this conference
" moved the King for their revival; but James
" ſharply replied—If you aim at a Scottiſh Preſby-
" tery, it agrees as well with monarchy as God and
" the Devil. There Jack and Tom, and Will and
" Dick, ſhall meet and cenſure me and my council.
" Therefore I reiterate my former ſpeech: Le Roi
" S'aviſera. Stay, I pray, for one ſeven years before
" you demand, and then if you find me grow pur-
" ſie and fat, I may perchance hearken to you; for
" that government will keep me in breath, and give
" me work enough."

[James, though a pedant and a tyrant, was far from being deſtitute of underſtanding—of that part, at leaſt, which conſiſted in political craft; and his opinion, in this particular, was countenanced by contemporaries of more reſpectable authority.—Burnet has thus characteriſed in a more particular manner the correſpondent ſhades of Religious and Political Opinion.—" The Preſbyte-
" rians," ſays he, " liked the civil government, and
" limited monarchy. But as the Independents were
" for a *commonwealth in the ſtate*, ſo they put *all the*
" *power of the church in the people*, and thought that
" their choice was an ordination. *Both were enemies*

" *to*

" *to this high prerogative that the King was aſſum-*
" *ing* *."]

It was therefore that both this monarch and his unfortunate ſucceſſor were ſo bigotedly attached to the hierarchy. Biſhops are convenient tools to mould mankind to ſubordination and monarchic government:—neceſſary ſteps in the ladder of deſpotiſm: while Preſbytery has a greater tendency to inſpire ideas of liberty and equality. It is, therefore, alſo, that ſucceeding monarchs have always diſplayed ſo favourable a diſpoſition to extend the principles of toleration to the Roman Catholics, whoſe religion prepares them for ſlavery and implicit obedience, and have regarded with ſo jealous an eye the encroachments of the Diſſenters, the very foundation of whoſe faith have a tendency to provoke enquiry.

If the Diſſenters, therefore, underſtood their own intereſt, they would relinquiſh all appeals to the go-

* Of all religious ſects the Independents are, perhaps, the firmeſt friends of political liberty. Fanatics and Enthuſiaſts are impatient enough, it is true, of that deſpotiſm, which *reſtrains their own particular opinions*; but they are generally too much blinded with religious *bigotry* to cheriſh the true republican principles of political and metaphyſical toleration; without which there can be no true equality, no genuine freedom. Among the diſtinguiſhed actors in the Revolution of 1649, the only true republicans were the Independents and the Deiſts. The Preſbyterians were for *fettering* and reſtoring royalty; and the fanatics were the willing tools of Cromweil's hypocriſy and uſurpation. And thus in France, if fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition ſhould revive (and to me there appears but too much probability of it) Monarchy may effectually be aboliſhed; but tyranny, under a new ſhape, will continue to ravage that devoted country.

[Since this note was written great events have taken place on the Theatre of Europe: none, perhaps of equal importance with that immediately connected with this ſubject. The tyrant, Robeſpierre, and his infant ſyſtem of Allegorical Superſtition, have fallen together: and thus, before they had time to germinate, are happily deſtroyed thoſe ſeeds of a latent prieſthood, which, elſe, at no diſtant period, might have enſlaved the minds of Frenchmen; and under whoſe influence ſome Pontifex Maximus, in the proceſs of time, might have exerciſed, with impunity, all the tremendous powers of Theocratic Tyranny.]

vernment

vernment about religious differences, from which they have nothing to hope, and apply themſelves ſolely and ſtrenuouſly to the reformation of political abuſes; conſcious that when the rational principles of liberty are once eſtabliſhed, no man will be peſtered with religious teſts, or branded with excluſions for articles of faith.

The perſecutions, then, of the Lollards and Reformers, with which the war between opinion and authority commenced in this country, ought not to be paſſed over in entire ſilence: the more eſpecially as the inveſtigations, provoked by theſe early champions for individual judgement, may be conſidered as the ſeeds and germs of thoſe more liberal enquiries which have ſince ſhot forth and bloſſomed.—Begin but to enquire, (no matter how ridiculous the ſubject) and the human mind (eſpecially if it has the good fortune to meet with perſecution) will never fail to make ſuch exertions in the purſuit as will ultimately direct it to the proper point.

For many centuries, from the final overthrow of the Roman empire, Europe had been ſunk in the moſt profound ignorance. What little learning and ſcience yet remained in the world, had retired to Conſtantinople and Alexandria; and had left the fairest portion of the globe to the dominion of feudal tyrants, who diſdained all knowledge but of the deſtructive arts of hunting and war, and prieſts, who were incapable of interpreting the jargon which they read; the blaſphemous abſurdities of which were dignified with the name of religion. But when the morning ſtar of literature, that harbinger of light and reaſon, once more made its appearance in our horiſon, mankind awoke, and began to look about them; and the people of this iſland, who (after their ſubjection to the Norman banditti) ſeem to have ſunk almoſt below the common ſtandard of mental degradation

dation, began, as well as their neighbours, to perceive the innumerable abuſes with which they were incumbered.

At the dawn of enquiry, it is not at all ſurpriſing, that attention ſhould have been directed, in the firſt inſtance, to the ſubject of religion;—that the firſt ſtruggles, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, of infant Liberty, ſhould be to burſt the ſwaithing bands of Superſtition that confined its limbs, and, incumbered with which, it would have been impoſſible to have grappled with the monſters of tyranny and ariſtocratic arrogance that were hovering over the cradle to devour it.

In ſhort, religious tyranny was at that time ſo extenſive in its operations, and mingled itſelf ſo much with every concern and function of civil life, that it was impoſſible but this ſhould be the earlieſt object of reformation. As Sir John Brute ſays of marriage—Prieſtcraft "had debauched their five "ſenſes. Every thing they ſaw, every thing they "heard, every thing they felt, every thing they "ſmelt, and every thing they taſted, had *prieſt* "in it."

John Wickliffe and his followers, the firſt of the Engliſh reformers, were alſo the firſt objects of *legal* perſecution for opinion. They began to flouriſh towards the end of the fourteenth century; and ſo early as the eighth of Henry IV. 1407 of the vulgar æra, we have a proſecution upon record among the State Trials, againſt maſter William Thorp, a prieſt, for attempting to break his way through the thick clouds of prejudices, and popiſh ſuperſtitions, and let in ſome feeble and imperfect rays of human reaſon upon the deluded faculties of his countrymen.

The offence he was charged with, was of a very heinous nature; almoſt as bad as aſſerting, in theſe days, that Kings are not always patterns of divine perfection; that "tyrants, who deſtroy the peace

and

" and happineſs of the world," ought to be ſent to the guillotine; or that (if reaſon is appealed to, in preference to ſuperſtitious prejudice) ſome things may be found, even in the Britiſh Conſtitution, which it is poſſible to alter for the better. The accuſation was, that "The thirde Sonday after Eaſter, the yere " of our Lorde MCCCC. and Seuen, William " Thorpe came vnto the Towne of Shrewisbury, " and thorow leaue graunted unto him to preache: " He ſaid openly in Synt Chaddis Chirche in " his Sermone, that *the ſacrament of the altare* " *after the conſecration was material brede.*"—That is to ſay, that it was not converted into the real body of Jeſus Chriſt:—or, in other words, to borrow an illuſtration from the Tale of a Tub, that *a piece of brown cruſt is not a fine ſhoulder of mutton.* " And that *ymages ſhulde in no wiſe be wor-* " *ſhiped.*—And that *men ſhulde not go on pilgremages.* " —And that *prieſtes have no title to tythes.*—And " that *it is not lefull for to ſwere in any wiſe.*—And " when the Archebiſhop had red thus his rolle, he " rolled it up agein, and ſaid to me," (for we have the trial from his own pen) " Ys this holſome learn- " inge to be among the people?"—" *Hinc illæ* " *lacrymæ!*" as Gurney ſo properly exclaimed, in anſwer to Mr. Fielding's lamentation, that political truths ſhould be ſold in twopenny pamphlets:—this is the cauſe of lamentation with the ſtate hypocrites of every age and profeſſion, that information ſhould be diſſeminated among the people.

Men whoſe ſituations render them too *wiſe* to practiſe what they know, may improve themſelves in political ſcience; and biſhops and cardinals may be as great *infidels* and *atheiſts* as they pleaſe: but that truth ſhould be diſſeminated among thoſe who have an intereſt in emancipating themſelves from prieſtcraft and political jugglers—this is the crime!—this is the abo-

abomination! and dungeons, fetters, and tranſportation muſt reward the audacious experiment.

That Thorpe, who was himſelf a prieſt, ſhould preach againſt the lawfulneſs of tythes, was a proof of purity and diſintereſtedneſs of principle, which, to beings of the ſmalleſt candour and liberality, muſt render him an object of eſteem. But the Archbiſhop of Canterbury and his brother inquiſitors (like Judge Jefferies upon the trial of Sidney, and the Judges of the Court of Juſticiary in a more recent tranſaction) could diſcover that the integrity of his principle was an additional provocation: ſince the man who is actuated by ſelfiſh ambition may be bought as ſoon as he is dangerous; but he who is prompted by conviction will perſevere to the end.

Thorpe, who was a man of conſiderable eloquence, for his time, defended himſelf with great fortitude; and appears from the following, among other paſſages, to have had a due contempt for thoſe trappings of vanity and oſtentation which eſtabliſhments, either religious or political, are ſo apt to ſubſtitute in place of principle and ſound morality. "But I ſaid, Sir, "luſty men and worldly louers delyte and couete, "and trauell to haue all their wittes quickened and "ſharpened with diuerſe ſenſible ſolace: but all the "feithful louers and folowers of Chriſte haue all "their delyte to heare Godde's worde, and to un-"derſtond it truely, and to worke therafter faithfully "and continually."

This very defence, however, was blaſphemy to the *mitred apoſtles* of the time. He was conſigned to the cuſtody of the inferior inquiſitors, "was led forth, "and brought into a foul unhoneſt priſon:" where he languiſhed, and in all probability died; for he was never heard of any more.

The prieſtly politicians or politic prieſts (for all political perſecution is prieſtcraft and ſuperſtition, and

and all prieſtcraft and ſuperſtition is political tyranny) having once dipped themſelves in the guilt of inquiſitorial vengeance, were not eaſily appeaſed. Like the young tyger, having once taſted of blood, their raging appetite was never to be ſatisfied with the inhuman banquet. Six years afterwards (1413) the very commencement of the reign of that butcher of the human race, the boaſted Henry V. was ſtained by the inveterate perſecution of the virtuous Sir John Oldcaſtle Lord Cobham; a perſecution the guilt of which lays fairly at the door of this idolized *aſſaſſin* *, ſince it was commenced and carried on under the auſpices of his expreſs conſent and approbation.

The biſhops accuſed, and the King remonſtrated; but Oldcaſtle had the ſeditious and rebellious firmneſs to aſſert his opinions even in the preſence of Majeſty. Henry knew that prieſtcraft was the neceſſary crutch of royalty; and that the rebel who queſtioned his theological infallibility might in time have the blaſphemous preſumption to queſtion alſo his political omnipotency: for when enquiry once begins who ſhall determine its boundaries? He gave him up, therefore, at once to the inquiſitorial fury of Arundel, Archbiſhop of Canterbury, and the reſt of the loyal aſſociators for protecting *the* LIBERTY *and* PROPERTY *of the church*:—for *churchmen* as well as *placemen* and *penſioners* have their *excluſive* liberties and properties to defend againſt the innovating doctrines of juſtice and reaſon.

On the 25th Sept. in this firſt year of Henry V. Cobham was condemned to excommunication and

* See, at the battle of Agincourt, his inhuman order for cutting the throats of all the priſoners. But neceſſity ſanctifies maſſacre, when practiſed by the Lord's anointed. The imminent danger of a whole people cannot palliate it in a republic, though practiſed againſt notorious traitors.

the

the Tower, for refuſing among other things of a like deſcription, to declare "that after the ſacramentall "wordes be ones ſpoken by a prieſt in his maſſe, the "material bread, that was before bread, is turned" *(hocus pocus!)* "into Chriſtes very body; and the "materyall Wyne, is turned into Chryſtes very "bloud; and ſo there remayneth in the ſacrament of "the aulter, from thensforth, no materyall breade, "nor materiall wyne, which were there before the "ſacramentall wordes were ſpoken." *St. Tri*, vol. 1. p. 41.

Cobham, however, with that independent ſpirit which is the fruit of diſintereſted conviction, appealed to the people in a PLACARD, which he procured to be poſted about the town; and which had conſiderable effect upon the public. The ASSOCIATORS endeavoured to combat this with *forged confeſſions* *, and other pious frauds, ſo conſiſtent with the general ſpirit of the bigoted upholders of ancient abuſes. "And whan they perceyued that "polyce wolde not helpe, but made more and more "againſt them, than ſought they out another falſe "practyſe." (Mark, Citizens, I pray you, this great prototype of modern politics! this ſtrong coincidence between *the popery of the conclave* and *of the cabinet!*) "They went vnto the king with a moſt "greuouſe complaint, lyke as they did afore in his "father's tyme, that in euery quarter of the realme, "by reaſon of Wickleues opinions, and the ſaid "Lord Cobham, were wonderful *contentions*, *rumours*, "TUMULTES, UPROURS *confederations*, *diſſencions*, "*diuiſions*, *differences*, *diſcordes*, *harmes*, *ſlaunders*, "*ſciſmes*, *ſectes*, SEDICIONS, *perturbacions*, *parels*, "UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLIES, *variauncies*, *ſtrifes*,

* N. B. As this was firſt publiſhed more than eight months ago, it could have no poſſible alluſion to the Confeſſion of Watt the ſpie!!!

"*fyghtinges*,

" *fyghtinges*, REBELLIOUS RUFFELINGS, and dayly " INSURRECTIONS!!!" *St. Tri.* vol. 1. p. 48.

Behold, Citizens, the ſources of the enlightened politics of miniſters at the cloſe of the eighteenth century! Admire no longer the inventive faculties of your *heaven-born Miniſter!* This is the *original:* the proclamation of Nov. 1792, was but the tranſlation! Wonder no longer where Sir James Saunderſon and his patron found their plots, their treaſons, and their inſurrections. They found them not it is true in our ſtreets or villages, in our commercial cities, or our provincial towns, but they ſound them in the records of former perſecutions,—*among the lying inventions of the* ENGLISH INQUISITION *at the commencement of the fifteenth century.*

One of theſe pretended inſurrections, according to loyal report, took place in St. Giles's fields.— " The complaint was made vnto the King of them, " that they made a great aſſemble in Sainct Gyls " Felde at London, purpoſing *the deſtruction of the* " *land*, and the *ſubuercyon of the commonwelth* *. As " the King was thus informed, he erected a banner " (ſaith Walden) with a croſſe thereupon, as the " Pope doth commonly by his legate, when he pre- " tendeth to warre againſt the Turke; and with a " great nombre of men entered the ſame felde, " *where as he found no ſuch company.*" (Like the dreadful inſurgents that were to have planted the tree of liberty upon Kennington-common, or the

* It is remarkable that among the modern advocates, as they call themſelves, for our ancient Conſtitution, Republicaniſm, or attachment to the *Commonwealth*, ſhould be conſidered as High Treaſon, though *all* the ancient writers uniformly agree in calling England a Commonwealth, and regard the King only as the Chief Magiſtrate of that Commonwealth; not as the *proprietor of an Imperial Crown*—a jargon unheard of till the unfortunate period of the Reſtoration!

more recent rebels of Blackheath, they had put on the cloak of darkneſs, and become inviſible; and the loyal heroes who, armed cap-a-pee, had iſſued forth to ſcour the infected country of *heretical ſedition*, after turning over every ſtone, and ſearching under every dock-leaf for the lurking incendiaries, returned with no other advantage than the appetite they had gained by the freſh air). "Yet was the "complaint judged true, becauſe the byſhoppes had "ſpoken it at the information of their prieſts."—*Ib.* p. 49.

But the parallel is not completed; and I ſhall continue the quotation, that I may ſhew the antiquity of the marriage—or rather concubinage between church and ſtate: a concubinage which has been ſubject indeed to ſome occaſional incontinencies—(the State, for its own convenience, changing its holy miſtreſs upon particular emergencies!) but which has been uniform in its principle—the mutual pillage and oppreſſion of the people!—"The church "(they ſaid) was hated; the dioceſanes were not "obeyd; the ordinaries were not regarded;" &c. "the laws and liberties of holy church"—for when was there a tyrant or perſecutor who could not talk of conſtitutions laws and liberties, at the very time when he was trampling them under foot by his lawleſs authority? "The lawes and liberties of holy "church," (the laws that declared bread and wine to be fleſh and blood—and the liberty of perſecuting every body who diſſented from the opinion) "were "troden vnder fote" (not of *the ſwiniſh multitude*, that epithet was reſerved for a more *enlightened age!*) the "Chryſten fayth was ruinouſly decayed;" (they had their cry of Atheiſm too!) "God's ſervice was laught "too ſcorn; the ſpiritual juriſdiction, authorite, ho-"nour, power, policy, lawes rytes, *ceremonies*, *curſes*, "*keyes*, *cenſures*, and *canonical ſanctions of the church*

" were had in vtter contempt.—This would be (he " ſayd) deſtruction to the commonwelth, a ſubuer- " cion to the land, and an utter decay of the King's " eſtate ryall, *if remedy were not ſought in tyme.*— " And this" (continues the writer of the trial) " was " their policy, to couple the Kinges authorite wyth " that they had done in their former councell of " craft, and ſo to make it thereby the ſtronger."

And what do you ſuppoſe this *remedy* might be, that was *to be ſought in time?* The King *called a parliament together in a great hurry*, at Leiceſter, and the people were plunged into a mad and unjuſtifiable war againſt France, whoſe avowed object (for the cabinet of Henry the Fifth had courage and ſincerity enough to avow its object in the firſt inſtance) was to impoſe a monarch upon that country whom the people neither deſired nor would accept. And thus we ſee the project of ſtopping the progreſs of political enquiry, by plunging into ſcenes of unjuſtifiable carnage, and depopulating the towns and villages, and waſting the treaſures of the country, in order to diſappoint the *ſeditious* views of reformers, and advocates for the rights of man, has the venerable recommendation of antiquity, and is by no means attributable to the ſublime invention of the preſent miniſter.

War, however, was not to be confided in alone. Perſecution of opinion was renewed with increaſed avidity. An act of parliament was paſſed, prohibiting, by ſanguinary penalties, the ſcriptures from being read in the mother tongue, (that is to ſay, information, ſuch as it was, from being diffuſed among the people) and declaring all ſuch ſeditious perſons as ſhould ſo read " heretykes to God, enemies to " the crowne, and moſt errant treitors to the land. Beſides this, it was enacted, that no ſanctuary, no privileged ground ſhould ſhelter them-though they

were

were permitted to thieves and murderers; but that if they perſevered in theſe *rebellious* practices, they ſhould firſt be hanged for treaſon againſt the King, and then be burned for hereſy againſt God.

CITIZENS! I could mention to you, alſo, another reign in which murderers have not only been pardoned, but penſioned, while even juſtice could not be obtained in behalf of thoſe who had been found guilty of enlightening the people.

Cobham had offended beyond all hope of mercy. He had carried his ſedition to the moſt extravagant extent. He had not only expoſed the corruptions of the clergy, but had been twice the occaſion (once in the days of Rich. II. anno 1365, and again in thoſe of Hen. IV. 1410) of a bill being brought into parliament to reform ſome of the abuſes which their waſteful pride had introduced. This bill had been introduced again into the parliament of Leiceſter, and was preſſed with conſiderable firmneſs (for parliaments were not always ſo complaiſant as the preſent!) and the fury of the eſtabliſhment was encreaſed by the danger that threatened theſe profitable corruptions. Perſecution raged in every part of the country; falſe alarms were diſſeminated, and armies led into the fields to diſperſe ſeditious meetings that never had any exiſtence but in the brains of penſioned alarmiſts; innumerable victims were immolated; and *emigration* was appealed to by crowds, who diſdained ſubmiſſion to the prevailing tyranny, and preferred abandoning their country to relinquiſhing their principles.

In the mean time Cobham eſcaped out of the Tower in the night, and fled into Wales; where he remained four years, ſhifting from place to place, till he was betrayed by the pretended friendſhip and affection of Lord Powys. This *noble Judas*, ſeduced by lordly gifts and promiſes, ſent his friend and

gueſt a priſoner to London, where on, the 14th of December 1418, he was convicted of *hereſy* and *treaſon*; for which, on the 25th of the ſame month, he was burned alive.

CITIZENS! The noble conſtancy of this martyr deſerves perpetual admiration; and though I hope mankind are now too far advanced in reaſon and philoſophy to throw away their lives, or even their breath, upon *theological* diſputes and ſubtleties, yet as even the creed of Cobham was TRUTH, compared with the monſtrous and tyrannous abſurdities of the eſtabliſhment, it may ſhew us the impotency even of the moſt inhuman tortures to ſuppreſs the progreſs of human reaſon, or ſubdue the manly and heroic ſpirit that pants for mental or political liberty.

The cruel preparations for his torments made no impreſſion upon him, nor ſhocked his illuſtrious conſtancy. Unawed by the approach of death, he continued to exhort the multitude, at the place of execution, to perſevere in that purſuit of truth for which he ſuffered. "In him," ſays the record, "were ſeen united the fearleſs ſpirit of a ſoldier, and "the holy reſignation of a true Chriſtian."

[In other words, he had a ſoul alike undaunted by the torments of death, and unimbittered by reſentment for his tormentors. Truth was the ſole object of his purſuit: and when life could no longer be preſerved with virtue, his only anxiety was how to make his death moſt beneficial to mankind.]

Such, CITIZENS, was the unconquerable ardour with which Britons, even in ages comparatively barbarous, contended and ſuffered for thoſe partial truths which the dawn of enquiry had diſcovered.

Should we then, when the meridian rays of truth and philoſophy are burſting upon us, be leſs animated by the invigorating warmth? Could not the utmoſt

moſt malice of the inquiſition—the gibbet and the conſuming fire, check the progreſs of enquiry into the meaning and interpretation of a few obſcure texts of ſcripture? and ſhall fines, pillories, and impriſonments,—the dungeons of Newgate and the inhoſpitable regions of Botany Bay intimidate thoſe who are contending-not for a text or fragment of a particular book, which may have been a thouſand times interpolated and altered, and whoſe origin, no individual can accurately trace; but about the ſenſe and context of the whole authentic and indiſputable volume of nature?—Not whether this ſhall be called bread and that be looked upon as wine; but whether MAN or BRUTE ſhall be written in the title page of that book which is to record the hiſtory and decide the happineſs or miſery of countleſs myriads of our fellow creatures.

The doctrines of Wickliffe, and the ſentiments of theſe brave reformers triumphed in the end over the fury of their oppoſers. And though the progreſs was ſlow, it was only ſo in proportion as the means of diffuſing information were few and feeble! The engines of truth are now encreaſed an hundred fold, and the advancement of human mind is proportionately rapid.

"If we do not ſilence the preſs," ſaid cardinal Wolſey, "the preſs will ſilence us." Fortunately for mankind the preſs *cannot* be ſilenced. Placemen and penſioners may *aſſociate* for ever; inquiſitions may be eſtabliſhed, and the Nilus of corruption pour forth its broods of ſpies and informers; but wherever the preſs has once been eſtabliſhed on a broad foundation, liberty muſt ultimately triumph. It is eaſier to ſweep the whole human race from the ſurface of the earth than to ſtop the torrent of information and political improvement, when the art of printing has attained its preſent height. Already has tyranny

ranny been driven, by this powerful engine, from many of its ſtrongeſt holds. The infallibility of the prieſthood—the divine right of kings—the doctrine of non-reſiſtance—the unqualified veneration for birth and title—the bulwarks of religious intolerance—all theſe once ſuppoſed impregnable fortreſſes have either yielded in their turn to the irreſiſtable artillery of reaſon, or continue at preſent to make but feeble reſiſtance. Preſs forward then, Citizens, with zeal and ardour, and be aſſured of approaching victory. Examine boldly the fortifications that are thrown up againſt you, and you will find them ſtill more untenable than thoſe you have already paſſed.

Formerly religious enquiry was to be the excluſive myſtery of a few intereſted traders: the prieſts and jugglers initiated in the ſacred calling. Our ſpiritual ſalvation was to be wrought we knew not how; by prayers and maſſes which we could not comprehend; by the *hocus pocus* of the prieſt behind the curtain: and he who preſumed to diffuſe theological information among the people was a diſturber and an enemy to ſociety. Now it is admitted that in matters of religion, ſo as he have but *ſome*, every man may enquire and think for himſelf: may take care of his ſoul in his own private way, and read what opinions he thinks fit. But though the veil of the ſanctuary is rent in twain, the curtain of the cabinet muſt be kept entire; and the *political* popes and conclaves muſt remain undiſturbed and unqueſtioned in their *ſanctum ſanctorum*.

In other words,—the higher powers have found that they muſt leave your ſouls to your own management; but the welfare of your bodies and temporal concerns are to be reſigned implicitly to the care of cardinals Pitt and Hawkeſbury, to whom (for the ſake of the trinity) Loughborough has of late been added. Placemen and penſioners are the prieſts and con-

confeſſors of the time, to whoſe eye alone the volume of political revelation is to be unfolded; and he who has the ſeditious preſumption to expound a ſingle text to the multitude, or teach the great body of the people the elements of that ſcience in which the happineſs and proſperity of the great body of the people are involved, muſt expect the ſtorms of miniſterial vengeance and the thunders of the royal vatican.

But ſhall theſe intimidate and ſtop us in the glorious career of truth and virtue?—No, citizens! the champions for the rights and happineſs of mankind ſhall vanquiſh theſe as they have vanquiſhed former difficulties; but as truth and liberty have acquired additional energy in their courſe, they ſhall be ſurmounted with greater celerity. The names of Gerrald and Margarot, of Skirving, Muir and Palmer ſhall reſound continually in our ears; and, fired by their illuſtrious example, we will preſs forward till our brows are crowned with the wreaths of victory; and our memory ſhall be embalmed with theirs, by the gratitude and admiration of mankind.

P. S. *As the notes of my Lectures (and indeed all my manuſcripts—the labours of my life) are ſtill in the hands of government; and as I have twice applied, without getting any ſort of anſwer, for their reſtoration, I cannot promiſe the immediate publication of the three diſcourſes that ought to follow this. But as it is a ſubject of growing importance, it is not my intention that its continuance ſhould depend on the uncertain recovery of my papers. The ſeven months of leiſure and retirement with which it has lately pleaſed the Miniſter to indulge me, has enabled me to render myſelf ſtill further acquainted with the eſſential facts; and as ſoon as the completion of my promiſed Narrative permits me to return to the ſubject, it ſhall be reſumed—perhaps with advantage from the delay.*

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☞ Shortly will be published, a Vindication of the POLITICAL Conduct of J. THELWAL, and the SOCIETY with which he is connected; with a Review of the PROCEEDINGS of GOVERNMENT relative to the LATE PROSECUTIONS.

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